Opinion: Caltrans needs to go on a staffing diet

By John Moorlach

This year, the majority Democratic Party found new ways to spend the $6 billion to $9 billion in additional tax revenue, passing the largest state budget in California history.

Funding to fix our roads and bridges, however, was woefully inadequate.



John Moorlach

Now the majority party has decided that California's roads are a mess. The governor has called the Legislature into a special session, which has manufactured a sense of urgency. Statistics have been gathered; analyses have been performed; bills to address the problem have been put forward. What is the one common component? The majority wants more of your money to "fix" the situation.

In fact, the "transportation" special session appears to be an exercise designed to pressure legislators into supporting a tax hike on gasoline – even though Californians already pay the nation's highest taxes.

Raising revenue is one option. However, cutting costs is a better one that should not be passed over. A great place to start is to review the agency charged with care and

maintenance of your state's transportation infrastructure – the California Department of Transportation.

In 2014, the non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office reported that Caltrans' Capital Outlay Support program, which oversees improvement projects and has been very opaque in its manpower management responsibilities, was overstaffed by approximately 3,500 full-time equivalent positions, at a cost of nearly $500 million annually. That's a half-billion tax dollars – for salaries, health care and pensions for extra staffing – that does nothing to improve our roads.

Caltrans must become a lean and efficient agency with staff focused on projects and outside consultants utilized when workloads increase. It is much easier to reduce outside contractors than it is to reduce staff. Yet, early retirements are in order, and streamlining must be proven long before taxpayers are asked to contribute more.

During these special legislative sessions bills can be introduced. Consequently, I introduced Senate Bill X1-9, the Responsible Contracting for Caltrans Act. It addresses the glaring flaws at Caltrans.

First, SBX1-9 would prohibit the use of temporary funding sources, such as loan repayments, bond funds and grant funds, to hire permanent staff.

Second, SBX1-9 would increase the share of contract employees in the Caltrans' COS program by 5 percent annually, beginning in 2016, until a 50/50 ratio of state staff and contract employees is reached in 2023.

Controlling the hiring of permanent staff with limited-term funds and increasing the requirement to contract out are simple, no-nonsense approaches to reining in a department that has lacked forward vision. Who could be opposed to such common sense? You guessed it – the public employee unions – whose primary role is to increase their membership at any cost.

Does California have an infrastructure maintenance deficit? Absolutely. Reducing Caltrans' bloated size before proposing that California families pay even higher taxes to fix our roads is the right thing to do.

John Moorlach is a Republican California state senator from Irvine.

Opinion: Women cracking gender ceilings in sports



Former pro Lindsay Davenport is coaching Madison Keys. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Ann Killion, San Francisco Chronicle

The news has come in waves this summer. Becky Hammon, the lone female assistant in the NBA, coached the Spurs to an NBA Summer League title.

A few weeks later, Nancy Lieberman was hired by the Sacramento

Kings to be an assistant coach under George Karl.

Jen Welter was hired as an assistant linebackers coaching intern for the Arizona Cardinals.

Sarah Thomas is preparing for the NFL season as the first full-time female official in the league.

Beth Mowins was hired to do play-by-play on Raiders preseason games.

Add in the overwhelming success of the U.S. women's national soccer team – with record-setting television ratings and coached by Jill Ellis, the first woman to take the Americans to a world title – the dominance of Serena Williams and UFC fighter Ronda Rousey and it's been a landmark summer for women in sports.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Vaccines have always been controversial

By Charlotte DeCroes Jacobs

In 1952, Americans suffered the worst polio epidemic in our nation's history. As in prior outbreaks, the disease spread during the summer, mainly attacking children who had been exposed to contaminated water at public pools or contaminated objects in other communal places. The poliovirus entered the body through the mouth and multiplied in the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms started innocently enough – a sore throat, a runny nose. As the virus moved throughout its victims' bloodstreams, the pains soon began – electric shocks darting

through the neck to legs, muscle spasms. Within a day or two, paralysis set in. If the virus made it to the nervous system in the base of the brain, death came quickly. By the outbreak's end, 58,000 people had been stricken. More than a third were paralyzed, many of who spent the rest of their lives in a wheelchair or bed.

Most Americans today have no concept of the terror generated by polio throughout the first half of the 20th century. During epidemics, newspapers and magazines displayed adorable children struggling to walk in braces or entombed in iron lungs, but the disease mostly fell off the national radar after it was eliminated from the country in 1979. In the past few years, however, polio has begun creeping back into headlines, for two opposite reasons. On the one hand, thanks to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the world is closer than ever to wiping out the virus completely; widespread vaccination efforts reduced the number of cases to 414 in 2014, mostly in Pakistan and Afghanistan. On the other hand, because of recent anti-vaccination trends, it's not unreasonable to worry that a resurgence of polio might afflict Americans again.

The person responsible for easing our minds over the past half century was Jonas Salk, a physician-scientist who was born in a New York tenement and driven by a passion to aid mankind. During the 1952 outbreak, with funds from the March of Dimes, he rushed to develop the earliest vaccine for polio that used a killed, or "inactivated," form of the virus. In that, he met resistance from more-senior scientists who believed that only a vaccine made from a live virus could provide lifelong protection.

The public was desperate for a vaccine, yet Salk was afraid these scientists would try to derail his efforts. Objections from one even prompted the famed newscaster Walter Winchell to warn his radio audience not to take the vaccine, because "it may be a killer." So Salk initially made and tested his

vaccine in secret. Thankfully, his promising preliminary results led to the March of Dimes launching the biggest clinical trial in the history of medicine. Beginning on April 26, 1954, with a 6-year-old named Randy Kerr from McLean, Va., the trial eventually involved 1.5 million children, and had remarkable results: Salk's vaccine was 80 to 90 percent effective in preventing paralytic polio. It was mass-produced and distributed around the country, and by the end of the decade it had reduced the incidence of paralytic polio in the United States by 90 percent.

When the success of the vaccine trial was first announced, the public crowned Jonas Salk a national hero. He experienced a celebrity accorded few scientists in the history of medicine. Yet his rebuke by the scientific community had only just begun. As heads of states around the world rushed to honor him, scientists – the one group whose adulation he craved – remained ominously silent. Basil O'Connor, director of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis/March of Dimes, said they acted as if Salk had committed a felony. They accused Salk of failing to give proper credit to other researchers whose work had laid the foundation for his own. Salk in fact had tried to give them credit. But the media had made him the icon for polio, ignoring other scientists' contributions. This set the stage for difficulties throughout Salk's career wherein politics in and beyond the scientific community seemed to override good science.

In 1961, a public health decision was made to replace Salk's vaccine with one developed by a virologist who constantly tried to discredit him, Albert Sabin. Sabin's oral vaccine, made with a live virus, was cheaper and more convenient, but also much riskier; it actually caused polio in some cases. Salk worked throughout the rest of his life trying to reverse the decision—a sole warrior in a fight against what he considered entirely a politically driven change. (In 1999, four years after his death, the Sabin vaccine was replaced

with a new version of Salk's vaccine, which is still used today.)

Salk also campaigned vigorously for mandatory vaccination, putting the health of the public foremost. He went as far as calling the immunization of all the world's children a "moral commitment." Thanks to his efforts – along with those of other researchers – we're able to enjoy our summers without the fear of a crippling disease.

America now has been polio free for more than 35 years, and children are supposed to be vaccinated when they are babies. We've reached the point, however, where it seems many people can't believe an epidemic could really occur. Some parents refuse vaccination, arguing that a healthy lifestyle is enough to protect their children from potentially lethal infections. But studies have shown that the introduction of sanitation actually enhances the circulation of poliovirus, because babies are no longer exposed to the virus in the very small amounts that used to produce lifelong immunity. Poliovirus can spread relentlessly once it gets a foothold in an unvaccinated community.

Such was the case shortly after Salk's vaccine was released in 1955. Massachusetts closed its vaccination program because a manufacturing error led to some contaminated shots. Even though the mishap was quickly corrected, the state did not reopen its program. That summer, Massachusetts suffered one of its largest epidemics. Four thousand people contracted polio, and 1,700 were paralyzed – mostly children.

Does the public want to repeat history? I think Jonas Salk would plead with them to learn lessons from our past. Californians did with the recent measles outbreak, which affected more than 130 people, the majority of who were unvaccinated. This helped spur the state to join Mississippi and West Virginia by mandating childhood vaccination, despite an outcry from several groups. Now if only 47 other states

would follow suit.

Charlotte DeCroes Jacobs is a professor emerita at the Stanford University School of Medicine and the author of Jonas Salk: A Life. She wrote this for What It Means to Be American a national conversation hosted by the Smithsonian and Zocalo Public Square.

Opinion: Online speech in the U.S. is really free

By Caitlin Dewey, Washington Post

In the past 12 months, popular Internet discourse has been severely afflicted with a malady we'll call the PCs. There's a lot of bellyaching, in short, over the perceived encroachment of "political correctness" and the persecution of "free speech." First Gamergate griped that it was being silenced; then users cried censorship over Twitter's more aggressive abuse policies; now Reddit, in a much-debated about-face, is zapping its most racist communities.

But here's a little reassurance/reality check for you: Regardless of the rules private companies pass, the U.S. still has some of the strongest protections of Internet speech anywhere. If you want to say something racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, anti-feminist, anti-corporate, cruel, subversive or incendiary — this, my friends, is your country.

Read the whole story

Opinion: An answer to the Keys' problem

By Steve Urie

Kathryn Reed's balanced **Aug. 12 article** on the plan to use herbicides to control invasive curlyleaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil, and native coontail in the Tahoe Keys begins with the overriding message of a study presented by the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association at this week's public meeting: "It's time to do something different."

Indeed it is, but it isn't what five Tahoe scientists proposed, which is to use "tailored and prescriptive use of selective approved herbicides" to attack the weeds choking the Keys' waterways. As much as the five agency managers and academics, who received the bulk of the study's $250,000 cost, would like us to believe that there are chemicals that are strong enough to be effective after being diluted by the flow from the Upper Truckee River and selective enough to distinguish between the two non-native plants and the half dozen native plants in the Keys' canals – it isn't true.



Steve Urie

Reed reports that it was noted that using the herbicides "would be like applying a chemical to kill dandelions on a

yard, but not killing the grass at the same time.” Probably true. Here are **15 human health problems** linked to using Monsanto’s Roundup.

One of the study’s authors, Lars Anderson **says in an intro video** that the program’s goals were to reduce the $400,000 annual cost to mechanically harvest the plants and “to overall improve the growth of native plants and have a habitat suitable for native plants and fish that’s also useful for humans to sail, and swim, and boat in.” Really, Keys property owners? You want your kids and visitors swimming in a cesspool of chemicals strong enough to kill vegetation?

None of the current Keys property owners is responsible for the destruction of the Upper Truckee River Marsh. That happened a half-century ago before anyone recognized the potential damage of punching a hole in nature’s filtering system and creating 11 miles of stagnant canals that have become a veritable Garden of Eden for non-native plants and animals. But the current Keys property owners can step up, take the lead, and do something to fix the vasin’s greatest environmental mistake – eliminate the canals.

Crazy! Impossible! Unaffordable! Where would all of the boats go?

The boats would be stored in **high-tech dry dock** at improved and expanded lagoon marinas. A partnership between the California Tahoe Conservancy, TRPA, and the TKPOA would reengineer the canals with parkways and wetlands to receive some of the river’s flow, and the lagoons would be reengineered to act as **better settling basins**.

Terrific, but who pays for it? We all do. The total cost is less than $100 million – equivalent to what TRPA receives in their environmental improvement program each year. Because they are losing their back-yard docks, Keys’ homeowners pay nothing and save weed and canal maintenance costs and have

attractive, eco-friendly backyards. California, Nevada, and TRPA shoulder the financial burden – and everyone gains a purer, clearer lake with less algae and far fewer aquatic invasive species issues.

It’s time to stop putting destructive, multi-million dollar band aids on Tahoe’s deepest wound and to step up and heal the lake.

Steve Urie is a Truckee resident and the author of “Tessie, Quagga Mussels, and Other Lake Tahoe Myths”.

Letter: ZCTCF grateful for community’s support

To the community,

The Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation thanks the multitude of individuals and businesses that contributed to making the 32nd annual Tahoe Tennis Classic such a success.

The foundation is the nonprofit entity responsible for the upkeep of the six courts at Zephyr Cove Park. It takes time and money to keep this valuable asset in pristine condition. The foundation’s main fundraiser is during the players’ dinner of the tournament. This year items were donated for the silent auction and raffle with a value of more than $10,000.



The all-volunteer foundation uses the proceeds to improve the courts – including repairing the playing surface. That will be the next big expenditure. Like all facilities, though, there are always maintenance issues that go beyond substantive changes.

A special thank you goes out to Harrah's Lake Tahoe for welcoming the nearly 200 people to the August dinner.

The foundation thanks the following businesses and people for their generosity:

Businesses:

A Massage at Tahoe, AAA Carson City, tennis pro Adam Robin, Adele's Restaurant & Lounge, Agave Azul Mexican Grill Restaurant, All Sports Fitness & Personal Training with Andy Veris, Angel Touch Salon & Spa, Anytime Fitness in Zephyr Cove, Bona Fide Books, Carson Valley Inn, Casey's Restaurant, Dart Beverage Center, Duke's Steak House at Fandango Casino, Elements Day Spa, Ernie's Coffee Shop, Megan Gandt Massage Therapy, Integrative Healing for Body & Soul, Genasci & Steigers, Getaway Café, Hair by Dawn at Hair Nail Studio, Harrah's Lake Tahoe, Harumi Sushi Restaurant, Heavenly Village Cinema, Boutique Tahoe, Lakeside Inn and Casino, Lake Tahoe Cruises, *Lake Tahoe News*, Lake Tahoe Yoga, Luigi's Tahoe Pizzeria, Mirabelle at Lake Tahoe, MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa, Mt. Rose Ski Resort, Oakley Shop in Heavenly Village, On the Rocks, Pilates instructor Rose Marie Ottman, Mind-Body Fitness, Payne Massage Therapy, Reno Aces Baseball Club, Reel-Lentless Fishing Charters, Splatter Studioz, Sprouts Natural Foods Café, Tahoe Best Friends, Tahoe Body Works, Structural Integration with Heather Valentine, Tahoe City Golf Course, Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters, Tahoe Tennis Academy by Justin Clark, Improv at Harveys, Ridge Tahoe, Tep's Villa Roma, Toast Tahoe Restaurant, Weidinger Public Relations, tennis pro Rob Wheatley, and Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation.

Individuals:

Mark Allione, Tom and Doreen Andriacchi, Carol and Carl Bergren, Sheila Cockerell, Hal Cole, Barbara Cooper, Sharon Dahlberg, Sharla and Jay Freeman, Ray Fugitt, Sheryl and Hersch Herschman, Melissa and Jess Jester, Ted Lerner, Judy McLennan, Kae Reed, Judy and Marc Spellman, Louise and Paul Proffer, Victoria Veris, Tricia Ward, and Carolyn Wright.

Carolyn Wright, Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation president

Letter: KOWL defends programming switch

To the community,

KOWL 1490 AM "Tahoe's Talk" was one of the original Rush Limbaugh affiliates from his days being based out of this region in Sacramento.

KOWL canceled the Rush Limbaugh show and it is off air as of this week. As the station owner and GM I made the decision. This was done for economic reasons and not for political reasons. I spent several years as the morning show host on KOWL and was well known as "lefty liberal". However, I would often defend Rush Limbaugh on air as having the right to say what he wants to say as this is America and we have that freedom. He spoke out against a society where everyone boycotts everyone else that offends them.

I repeatedly said that it should be up to the free market and not a knee-jerk reaction to someone's opinion. And now the free market has spoken. Rush has repelled local, regional, and

national advertisers from KOWL costing the stations thousands of dollars in advertisers. Since KOWL is a small unrated market, advertisers would rather just avoid the whole station than take the risk of being associated with Rush's increasingly toxic brand.

In addition to that, Rush Limbaugh is one of the only shows in radio to charge a monthly fee to affiliates. I spent a lot of time negotiating directly with Limbaugh's syndicator. I told them that we didn't want to lose his show, but that we couldn't pay him a fee in addition to him losing us money repelling advertisers and they refused to drop the monthly free. Ironically, they lost the fee anyway and a long time affiliate. I really don't understand why they forced our hand like this, it's now a lose-lose situation.

As further proof that I did not do this for political reasons, I replaced Limbaugh with another prominent conservative who does not charge a monthly fee and is not on the radio industry "controversial programming list" that advertisers avoid: "The Dennis Prager Show". Prager now airs live on KOWL from 9am-noon Monday-Friday in the same spot that Limbaugh occupied for well over 20 years.

KOWL is a news-talk station that represents a variety of opinions from across the political spectrum with national shows. We have live local news each weekday morning and CBS news at the top of every hour. We thank Rush Limbaugh for his years of representing the conservative side and now hand that torch off to Dennis Prager.

Steve Harness, KOWL owner-general manager

Letter: Farmers Ins. takes turn at B&B

To the community,

The Jonathan Hetherton Farmers Insurance Agency was the Adopt A Day of Nourishment host for Bread & Broth's dinner on Aug. 3. Their sponsorship helped provide a nourishing dinner for those who deal with the challenges of hunger in our community, which include the working poor, families in need, elderly on a fixed income, as well as those living outdoors.

Being a business committed to serving the community through service, Jonathan Hetherton chose to sponsor a B&B dinner and brought his agency team members Tiffany Hetherton Grimes, Bill Hetherton, Maria Sandorff and Nancy Macias to cheerfully prepare giveaway bags, man the serving line, clean tables, and even dry dishes.

"Thank you Bread & Broth and your amazing team of volunteers for allowing the Hetherton Agency to assist today," said Jonathan Hetherton. "Our family business has been in Lake Tahoe since 1968 and we truly love being a member of this community. Its organizations like yours which make Lake Tahoe a true community in which I'm proud to live."

An a nonprofit organization, B&B is truly grateful for businesses like the Hetherton Farmer's Insurance Agency that in addition to providing insurance protection for their clients, also helps to protect and support those who for many reasons need help in their daily lives to deal with the hardships of hunger.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Body cameras on cops just the beginning

By C. Robert Gibson, Aljazeera America

The grass-roots push to equip police officers with body cameras has been effective: One-third of all police departments now have them, a significant increase since 2013, when the US Justice Department found that 75 percent of surveyed police departments didn’t use the technology.

Recent incidents in Cincinnati and rural New Hampshire have shown that the cameras simultaneously hold trigger-happy cops accountable and exonerate police officers who only pulled the trigger when they had no other option. Now, it’s time for local governments to start listening to and implementing further demands of the police-accountability movement.

Body cameras thus prove themselves to be indispensable. One officer who acted recklessly is facing murder charges, and two other officers who acted out of self-defense won’t be charged. When a police officer is equipped with a body camera, he or she will be more likely to think before pulling the trigger, knowing that his or her actions will be under public scrutiny.

However, body cameras only scratch the surface of what it takes for police departments to become fully accountable to the communities they’re meant to serve.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Grand jury destroying its credibility

By Larry Weitzman

In the third and most insidiously false political report (Case GJ-14-12) from the Civil Grand Jury (FY 14/15) entitled "Putting Political Gain Above What's Right for the County" is a perfect title to describe the grand jury actions. They have become a political body and a kangaroo court worthy of a Third World dictatorship.

In another attempted political and character assassination of the county auditor, the GJ attempts to blame the alleged $3.5 million loss of federal fund reimbursement on the failure of what is known as the county Cost Allocation Plan on the auditor instead of the proper culprit, the county Information Technology director, Kelly Webb. The GJ talks of having credible witnesses, but if that list were revealed, you would find that the witnesses were the actual culprits or accessories – the responsible parties. You would also find that their testimony was not evidentiary, as it was unsworn. However, my research consists of dozens of emails, many from the actual culprit, Kelly Webb, admitting she didn't understand how to prepare and what to prepare in the way of documentation and keep and maintain the billing and record keeping required. Webb was clearly unqualified; she didn't understand record keeping within her department and that she didn't understand the CAP.



Larry Weitzman

Not only did Webb fail to understand the CAP, so did the GJ in that a large part of the reimbursement loss is a result of IT Department's failure to directly bill and maintain the related time records. That is not part of the CAP, as direct billing is an independent requirement outside of the CAP. Webb failed to do just that as listed in the state Controller's Office findings: "Detailed time sheets are not maintained for those staff that are directly billed to departments. IT Department Management does not understand the purpose of the Countywide Cost Allocation Plan."

15 years without problems

For more than 15 years the CAP rarely, if ever, had a problem with the state Controller's Office. It had gone through several desk audits during this period with no issues. IT for that period did its job with respect to the CAP and the recovery of state and federal reimbursement of IT costs with respect for the services rendered to these reimbursable programs. It's a matter of properly billing and allocating its mainframe, network usage and other expenses incurred in IT for these reimbursable programs.

Now let's get one thing clear: The CAP is not the problem or issue. The problem is each department's responsibility with the collection of reimbursable expenses, billing and data with respect to state and federal programs and that has to do with record keeping within each respective department for the CAP. And that fact is made clear in the State Controller's report. This issue was not with the CAP; it was the IT Department's

failure to do proper record keeping, even IT's failure to keep track of computers connected to its network.

What could have caused that after 15 years of no issues? Something must have changed within the IT department and it did starting with the appointment of Webb to the position of interim IT director in February 2011. One of the duties of department heads is allocating department costs to those functions and programs within the county to accurately reflect their costs. By doing so the county can recover and/or receive reimbursement for certain state and federal programs the county administers.

Key person laid off

But something else happened and that was the layoff (by having her position eliminated) of a certain senior department analyst (orchestrated by Webb and then-CAO Terri Daly). This particular IT analyst for the past several years kept the appropriate billing records and time sheets, kept track of network inventories and performed various mainframe allocations that correctly supported the CAP and to obtain reimbursements for IT time related to state and federal programs administered by El Dorado County. After this analyst's elimination, recordkeeping and direct billing relative to the reimbursements and CAP went south. No one in IT continued the work of the eliminated senior IT analyst. A direct Webb failure.

As to requests for help from the IT Department, a series of emails demonstrates Webb's total and complete failure in compiling necessary information and failure to maintain billing records as the cause of the county's losing the millions of reimbursable charges from outside agencies. In several emails from Webb, she never asks for help but instead tries to use and supply knowingly bogus information

IT wandering in the desert of incompetence

It all started in an email from Feb. 28, 2012, from the CAO's office in which it was indicated that IT was "in the process of completing "the cost applied charges (direct billing) for F/Y 2012-2013." Nothing could have been further from the truth as no one in IT kept time sheets or did the direct billing and Webb knew this. And there is no documentation of help being asked for by Webb. This was all a charade to hide Webb's incompetence.

In September 2012, the Auditor's Office appears to be getting nervous when they ask for billing rates with respect to IT. No answer until a follow-up message on Jan 7, 2013, asks again for information to which a reply is received in seven minutes saying, "These rates are so old that we have been unable to determine the methodology behind them. Kelly Webb and I know that all the IT rates need to be looked at." IT is not doing their job. In between this series of emails another series of emails from the Auditor's Office also asked for the same information directly below.

On Nov. 2, 2012, an email directed to Webb from the Auditor's Office asks Webb for IT costs-applied amounts (direct billing) for mainframe use and that the costs need to be updated: "We cannot use these amounts as they are currently budgeted." Twenty-five minutes later from Webb was an email response: "The current FY 12-13 budget does currently have IT cost applied amounts the same as FY 11-12. Laura and I have met but have not had time to go over the methodology in detail. I will need to talk to Laura to figure out who we have available to work on updating the FY 12-13 rates."

In a series of June 2013 emails starting with Webb, she admits she is trying to "recreate a scenario for both mainframe and network" from documents that are years old but admits, "We are out of time for cash departments … but it would only be useful at this point for non-cash departments." A week later IT again asks in an email, "Would it be appropriate to use the 11/12 methodology and apply to the 12/13 budget to come up with

something for 12/13?” The auditor’s response on June 26, 2013: “Posting the FY 11-12 IT cost applied (direct billing) to FY 12-13 is not acceptable.”

In all the emails spanning over a year, nowhere is there a request for help from the IT Department, probably because the IT Department head was so incompetent she didn’t know what help to ask for. And this is not the whole extent of the mistakes and lack of knowledge demonstrated by Webb’s emails. There is more.

A direct email from the State Controller’s Office to EDC on July 24, 2013, says it all:

“We are in the process of our A-87 Cost Plan field review and I am requesting some supporting documentation from Information Technologies as follows:

“Please provide for each charging function (Systems and Programming, Network & PC Support, Telephone Communications, Central Duplicating and Records Management):

“1. The methodology used for direct billing

“2. Samples of direct billing invoices for

“ a. Child Support

“b. Social Services

“c. Roads

“If time records are used for any of the above methodologies, I need to know how they’re developed and whether estimates or actual time is used.

“Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

“Thank you.

“State Controller’s Office”

The Controller’s Office is clear: The failure of IT management is the reason the for the loss of reimbursable costs and it clearly stated in its audit report: “detailed time sheets are not maintained for staff that are directly billed to departments.”

That is a management failure of IT alone and no one else. The auditor can’t reproduce those records or cure that fatal failure. Additionally, and most devastating was the finding by controller that “IT Department Management does not understand the purpose of the countywide Cost Allocation Plan.”

This problem was not apparent in any other county department and not in IT until Kelly Webb was appointed Interim IT director. The Grand Jury’s conclusion not only lacked evidence, but it was absolutely incorrect. Why should anyone believe any of their reports? The GJ has no credibility. Even as political spin doctors; they are guilty of gross malpractice. They are attacking competent county employees with a suicide bomb of incompetence.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of rescue.