Letter: Urging support of SB850

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to Gov. Jerry Brown on Sept. 26 and is reprinted with permission.***

Dear Governor Brown:

I am writing to you to urge your signature into law of SB 850 ("The Bill") by State Senator Block. The Bill as is valuable to our State's future to increase the education and training of residents of our State.

The Bill also creates an opportunity to allow for the Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) to apply to be one of the pilot sites and offer a baccalaureate degree to students in South Lake Tahoe. This latter point is particularly important because of our remote location and distance from other public four-year colleges. The South Shore needs a trained population base to grow a viable and diversified local economy and create opportunity for all segments of our diverse economy.



David Jinkens

This communication is a follow-up to my email communication to your office today in support of SB 850.

In summary, please allow me to offer the following additional reasons you should support this Bill:

• "California needs to produce one million more baccalaureate

degrees than the state currently produces to remain economically competitive in the coming decades.” California business and industry need to hire trained Californians first and foremost to reduce unemployment and grow the State and local economy.

• Offering a baccalaureate degree in South Lake Tahoe would complement the excellent work being undertaken by the Lake Tahoe Community College and the renowned preparatory work being conducted by the Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

• Every motivated person should have an opportunity to pursue a baccalaureate degree at a place that is convenient, accessible, and affordable.

• Careers in public safety, technology, and health services now often require baccalaureate degrees even though they may not have required them in the past.

• 63 percent of job openings will require some college education and 33 percent will require a bachelor’s degree.

• Nationally, community college baccalaureate degrees have proven to be cost effective. In a time when student debt is a national concern, low cost, quality degree programs are vital.

• Authorizing community colleges to offer limited, targeted applied baccalaureate degrees will increase access for underserved areas and populations, benefit the State economy, remove barriers to completion, and compensate for the lack of university programs or capacity in certain fields. • Community colleges have a proven record of meeting local workforce demands in applied and technical areas, supporting underrepresented students, and providing affordable, accessible quality instruction.

• 21 states have authorized community colleges to award applied baccalaureate degrees that help meet workforce demand. I urge and encourage you to support SB 850. This is not a

partisan bill but rather a good-government measure.

I have no other interest in the matter except to see all who live in our community and State prosper and become productive residents and citizens. Our community's and the State's future depend on having an educated and qualified work force. Thank you!

David M. Jinkens

Letter: Reasons to vote for Measure F

To the community,

I've served on Lake Tahoe Community College's board of trustees for the college's entire 40-year history. I was also one of a core group of community members who, starting back in the 1960s, worked together to bring a community college to our town. I am asking for your support this November for Measure F, a bond measure that will revitalize and modernize our aging college while delivering real value to South Lake Tahoe. It will also make it possible for a four-year college education to be earned right here at home.



Roberta Mason

The Measure F bond will cost about $75 per year for the average homeowner. That is a real cost to taxpayers, but it's a reasonable price to pay —- about the cost of two cups of coffee per month. Even better, that cost offers a great return on investment: more construction jobs, more students coming to campus and purchasing goods and services in town, and increased property values, to name a few. This $55 million bond can be leveraged into approximately $107 million through matching state funds and grant opportunities. So for their $55 million, community members and business owners will potentially see nearly double that amount come into our community -— a much-needed economic shot in the arm for Tahoe.

I was there when the ground broke at LTCC's current campus, and I can now see clearly how time and mountain weather has eroded it. Measure F monies will maintain and modernize LTCC's 25-year-old campus, replacing outdated and failing electrical, heating and cooling systems, technology, and parking lots, trails and walkways. Leaky roofs will be repaired, and buildings will be made safer. Science labs and classrooms will be upgraded so students have the best learning environment possible. Measure F also provides for a new public safety training center, where our fire academy cadets and emergency personnel throughout the region can receive world-class training. This Center will also provide a hub during crises such as wildfires, earthquakes, and other disasters, so emergency officials can coordinate their efforts and save lives. There are a number of other projects the bond will also provide for: I encourage you to go to online www.ltcc.edu/measuref to see the complete bond project list so you know exactly what your dollars will bring to life on our campus, and in our community.

While providing access to four-year degrees wasn't the original mission of the community college system in California, many community members and business owners have encouraged LTCC to pursue offering baccalaureates. We heard

them loud and clear at the college's 20/20 Vision session last fall. The state also recognizes that need. California is simply not producing enough college graduates to provide the work force it needs. The UC and CSU systems, while certainly high quality, are out of reach financially for many of our young people. If we want to employ our youth and educate the highly-skilled workforce California needs now, then the community college system must help. That's why it's launching a pilot program to begin offering four-year degrees once the governor signs SB 850 into law. We hope LTCC will be chosen for this program – we're in a good position to be tapped for it. But if not, then Measure F provides for a university center on campus where a partner university can come in to jointly provide four-year degrees. No matter the outcome, LTCC will be poised to provide students and parents what they're demanding –- access to a baccalaureate degree that's affordable, and local.

The community college system's mission is changing as it responds to real-world issues facing California. With your help on Nov. 4, Lake Tahoe Community College can play a part in solving these issues while providing a modern, world-class institution to our town. Please vote Yes for Measure F – for our town, our future, and for our kids.

Roberta Mason, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Young Eagles Rally a success

To the community,

The Truckee Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association

(EAA) held a Young Eagles Rally at the Lake Tahoe Airport on Sept. 21 and gave free airplane rides to 46 area youngsters.

The EAA started the Young Eagles program in 1993 with the goal of introducing a million youths, 8 through 17 years old, to aviation with a free airplane ride by the Wright brothers' flight centennial, Dec. 17, 2003. We exceeded the national goal and continued the program, having flown over 1.8 million Young Eagles worldwide since 2003.

Our EAA Chapter 1073 did not do a rally at South Lake Tahoe last year due to smoke canceling the Lake in the Sky Air Show, and we were happy to return this year. We'll be back again next year and do more rides for more Young Eagles.

Pilots are not compensated monetarily for their time or their aircraft costs, but they receive an even greater reward, that of seeing the smiles of Young Eagles when they deplane after their flights.

The pilots and ground volunteers enjoyed the small town air show atmosphere, and also noticed how appreciative kids and parents were for our doing the flights. Your communities' members' attitudes were additional rewards for all of us.

Thank you to the airport staff for helping with airport arrangements, and to the members of the air show committee who helped with lots of small details.

We'll see you and your soon-to-be Young Eagles next year at the Lake Tahoe Airport.

Tom Meadows, EAA 1073 Young Eagles Coordinator

Letter: Inefficiencies plague El Dorado County

Publisher's note: ***This letter was given to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors Sept. 23. The issue pertains to a grader for the Meeks Bay area. The chair of the Meeks Bay fire board, the same person who was fine with the payout and subsequent pension the fire chief received, has blamed the auditor-controller for the mess. The auditor-controller explains here why the Community Development Agency is to blame for the delay of purchasing the grader. The board voted to pay for the grader with cash, per the auditor's recommendation.***

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The purpose of this letter is to document (1) my opposition to the CDA Director's recommendation on this matter, (2) my disappointment in the CDA's Board letter, and (3) my recommendation that your Board instruct the CDA Director to take the initial steps to improve the administrative controls at CDA.

Opposition to Recommendation

CDA determined that the County was better off owning this motor grader versus leasing this motor grader. I have not seen CDA's analysis that supports that determination, but it seems reasonable. I recommend that this item be trailed until 2:00 PM today. If CDA has an analysis that indicates that it is better to own than lease, I recommend that the County general fund loan $350,000 to CSA#3, and that the County buy this motor grader. The County Treasurer's pool rate is generally less than 1%, significantly lower than the rate charged by John Deere.

Disappointment with Board Letter

A CDA employee signed a purchase contract with Pape Machinery, Inc. for $753,526 for two motor graders dated April 29, 2014. I can find no evidence that this purchase contract was approved by County Counsel. I think that this is a significant omission from the Board letter. It is unclear to me whether the signed purchase contract dated April, 2014, will hold precedence over the operating lease that your Board is being asked to approve today.

It is very unusual for any County employee other than the CAO or the Board Chair to sign a $750,000 contract. Accordingly, one would assume that a copy of the contract would be routed to the employee's superiors as soon as possible. I am disappointed that the Board letter does not indicate when a copy of the signed purchase contract was delivered to CDA Administration.

Improvements needed to CDA's Administrative Controls

An unauthorized purchased contract, dated April 2014, was signed by a CDA employee and the matter was not brought before your Board until September 2014.

A $350,000 motor grader was delivered to CDA in May, and the matter was not brought before your Board until September 2014.

I have asked a number of questions of the CDA Director regarding this matter that he has been unable to answer. The CDA Director supports an investigation of the matter by an outside consultant that is being recommended by the CAO.

This motor grader Legistar file was established on June 19, 2013, fifteen months ago. A number of questions remain unanswered regarding this item. CDA's e-mail records indicate an enormous amount of time has been spent on this matter due to confusion at CDA. CDA is a sputtering, slow bureaucracy.

I recommend as part of this agenda item your Board direct the CDA Director to make efforts to significantly improve the

administrative control structure at CDA.

Sincerely,

Joe Harn, CPA auditor-controller

Letter: Tallac High student thanks community

To the community,

The first day at Mt. Tallac School started with a big bang! The school day began with a community meet and greet.

The students at Mt. Tallac High School were greeted by community members and local business representatives, where information was provided about employment opportunities and necessary job related skills.

The businesses and community members in attendance were: Joy Barney, Oscar Ortega, Megan Dee-U.S. Forest Service; Alberto Caballero-Generation Green; Scott Leonard-Leonard, Garrick Terveer-Gas Construction; Pete Van Arnum-El Dorado Sheriff's Office; Sally Williams-South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Treatment Center; Hannah Greenstreet-Live Violence Free; Melinda Steanns, John Rice, Scott Justice-Sierra-at-Tahoe; Eric Campbell-Bank of the West; Ivove Larson-Lake Tahoe Unified School District; Dede Aspero-Hard Rock Hotel and Casino; Rich Barna, Anna Nioten-Tahoe Turning Point; Maxene Harlow—Knit-Crocket-Spin; Rebbeca Del Pozo-Harrah's and Harveys; Ed Cook-Ed Cook Tree Service; Alan Barichievich-Barton Hospital Rehab and Sports Medicine; and last but not least, Stan Larson, Barbara Bannar-community members.

Not only had our school been visited by the many businesses and community members listed above, but we were provided snacks from Ellie McCall from the business Chase International.

All of the Tallac staff and students feel very thankful for the time these businesses had taken out of their day, and the snacks that was provided for the meet and greet. With all of our hearts and soul, thank you.

Kalayna Miller, Mt. Tallac High School student

Letter: Chamber explains endorsement process

To the community,

When the Tahoe Chamber board decided to do what chambers of commerce all over the U.S. already do – endorse candidates – they did considerable research on the processes in place in other chambers, large and small. The board determined the need for a candidate endorsement committee (CEC) and reached out to the community for volunteers through media and chamber newsletters. [*LTN note: Lake Tahoe News, which is not a member of any chamber, was not contacted.*]

It was the board's intent to have an apolitical entity with members from throughout our "One South Shore". The composition of the candidate endorsement committee was diverse in that it included seven California residents and one Nevada resident ranging in age from 30 to 65, all from small businesses with the exception two who came from educational and religious institutions. Scott Valentine from Lake Tahoe Community

College abstained from scoring college board of trustee candidates. The eight individuals who volunteered to serve their community by putting in countless hours of planning and research are greatly appreciated by the board and the membership for their dedication.

The CEC sent an invitation to all candidates inviting them to seek an endorsement. Not all candidates sought an endorsement for a wide variety of personal and professional reasons, which is to be expected. Some candidates were running unopposed, while others may have felt that an endorsement from Tahoe Chamber would not be in alignment with their platforms or interests.

However, all candidates were given an opportunity to complete the CEC's questionnaire that was based predominately upon the Tahoe Future A South Shore Community Vision 2020 document. This document was adopted by the Tahoe Chamber board of directors in 2013 as a policy statement that guides the organization's support of initiatives and candidates. Not all candidates chose to complete the questionnaire, although some provided other written materials they thought might be helpful to the CEC.

Whether seeking an endorsement or not all candidates were evaluated and scored as to their alignment with the Tahoe Future document. [*LTN note: This is not true. This is from B Gorman to Kenny Curtzwiler: "The CEC apparently did not score you when they scored Sue."*] However, only those seeking an endorsement were eligible. Therefore, the committee considered Wendy David, Brooke Laine, Matt Palacio and Angela Swanson for possible City Council endorsement.

For more details on the process and a copy of the questionnaire, please visit the Endorsements page on Tahoe Chamber's website.

B Gorman, CEO Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce

Letter: Chamber endorsement process flawed

To the community,

On July 24 at noon, I was contacted by the Tahoe Chamber to participate in their endorsement process. At 3:50pm, I contacted them to ask a question and meet with them and I was told because they were under rules of the FPPC I could not contact them individually. At 4:04, I declined to participate in their selection process.

In the Tahoe Chamber's press release of the criteria of selection they said that the selection for whatever political endorsement they would make was based on personal interviews and answers from their questioner. Since I participated in neither I found it interesting that information was not released. I also found it interesting that the District V criteria page was missing from the press release.



Kenny Curtzwiler

Several other political candidates also chose not to participate: City Council – Bruce Grego, Austin Sass and Tom Davis; STPUD board – Jim Jones and Duane Wallace; El Dorado County District V – Kenny Curtzwiler.

I can say I found the Tahoe Chamber process flawed, their actual members (650) were uninformed as to the decisions and completely left out of the loop in the decision-making, for the chamber to represent the feelings of the entire chamber is incorrect. There were eight members who selected the candidates of their choice of which three are Nevada based, one who is a rabbi (separation of church and state comes to mind), one who works for LTCC, one who works in the same building as Austin Sass (who did not participate) and one who works for the real estate company that handles all of the city of South Lake Tahoe redevelopment land sales.

I found the whole process rather comical and flawed from the beginning and do not feel the chamber should be involved in the endorsement process when the majority of the chamber members did not participate. I was not asked and I am a chamber member and their endorsements do not reflect what my choices would have been. This is a very small town with a big future ahead of it and we should be very wary of endorsements from a very small percentage of Tahoe Chamber members. I and the other candidates who did not participate are asking the community to contact all the candidates and make their own decision as to whom they would like to see in office. We all know each other in this town and for the chamber to get involved is wrong, immoral and causing a further divide here that may or not may be able to be corrected with an election.

Remember to vote on Nov. 4.

Kenny Curtzwiler, El Dorado County supervisor candidate

Editorial: Fire is a statewide issue

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Sept. 18, 2014, Sacramento Bee.***

Fire has a tipping point in hot, dry weather. As the relative humidity drops – 22 percent is the magic number, according to fire officials – benign situations can morph into catastrophes.

A car with a hot engine parked near some dead brush, barbecue coals tossed into the trash, even a lawnmower hitting a rock during a California fire season can set off a conflagration. Three years of drought have just upped the ante.

Just last week in Orange County's Silverado Canyon, a jerry-built garden fence made out of metal sheeting got so hot that it touched off a 1,600-acre brush fire.

Californians tend to think of this as a rural problem. It isn't. This year's fire fear isn't just about Pollock Pines and Weed.

Read the whole story

Opinion: EDC CAO – arrogance or incompetence?

By Larry Weitzman

As the investigation grows, it becomes apparent that the chief

administrative officer, her assistant and most of the office are in trouble. A Board of Supervisors meeting on Sept. 9 revealed a new scandal could be happening and it involves a simple snowplow.

It seems the CAO's office can't even buy equipment without messing it up. The equipment is necessary for clearing roads north of Emerald Bay to the Placer County line and serves about 2,000 property owners.



Larry Weitzman

This problem started more than a year ago when an item appeared on the BOS consent calendar Sept. 10, 2013, for the purchase of two John Deere Motor Graders (snowplows) for a zone of benefit in the Lake Tahoe Basin from the low bidder, Pape Machinery of Sacramento. Funding was to come from a special assessment placed on the benefitting lands owners who live in the zone of benefit. They pay a $50 a year parcel tax, totaling about $100,000 annually. This was not even a general fund item.

While the BOS approved this item on the consent calendar, the approval perhaps was a bit unclear. The approval said it was for a one-time purchase of two John Deere motor graders for approximately $814,000, but it had a provision for lease financing of the snowplows as well.

Pape finished the delivery of the two snowplows in about May of this year. The first one appears to have been paid for with cash, but the second one has not been paid for, although EDC has had possession for four months. The Community Development

Agency was handling this transaction could have paid for it, but for some unknown reason they wanted to change the deal to an operational lease according to the hearing paperwork of the Sept. 9, 2014, meeting that has been continued to Sept. 23.

In the meantime, Pape Machinery is out a $407,000 snowplow and has not been paid. To summarize a series of emails from Pape and El Dorado County, it appears that EDC has not been telling the truth to Pape. They are getting the run around from EDC officials and Pape is threatening repossession. Imagine an EDC official fibbing to a vendor.

In attempting to get the original documents from the September 2013 BOS meeting from the BOS website, they have mysteriously disappeared. Of all the agenda items from said date, only item No. 16, 13-0778, the consent item to buy these snowplows, is missing. Is this the beginning of a cover up?

For reasons unknown, the CAO, CDA wanted to change the deal according to the Sept. 9 agenda. Using the consent calendar and hoping no member of the public or BOS wanted an open public hearing, the CAO, CDA asked to waive the bidding requirements required by law and requested permission to enter into a new, different and probably more expensive operational lease. Because the CAO, CDA wants to change the deal it requires a new bidding process by law. This simple purchase of two needed snowplows has turned into a nightmare for Pape and the residents of the affected Lake Tahoe area. This problem developed long before Steve Pedretti became the CDA director.

At this point nothing should be approved until the whole truth of who in the CAO‘s office messed this otherwise simple deal up and why. Although every item with respect to this transaction was requested via the California Public Records Act over 10 days ago by this writer, nothing has been received.

Terri Daly, the CAO, is well aware of her office’s mistakes,

whether intentional or negligent. I have the purchase order and receipt document for snowplow No. 1, which she personally signed among other documents I otherwise have obtained through other sources. What else smells bad is the use of the consent calendar to slide mistakes by the public and the BOS. Daly used the exact same procedure to hang Amador County on a $20 million unnecessary lease obligation, which Amador will pay $1.5 million annually for another 14 years.

But this example of incompetence and/or arrogance is just scratching the surface. The CAO is directly responsible for most of the upcoming budget deficits of about $20 million annually that are now projected over the next four years. Can you say $80 million dollars upside down? That will wipe out the surplus in the general fund of $54 million built up by Auditor Joe Harn over the last 21 years, a budget surplus that started as a small deficit when he became auditor. Harn also was able to retire an additional $22 million in bond indebtedness over the same period. As of this date, the county has no bond indebtedness.

Since that General Fund peaked on June 30, 2013, it has already decreased by about $9 million to have an ending balance of about $45 million on June 30, 2014. The yearend county budget of June 30, 2015, appears to have a zero deficit (a zero balance created by using more of that General Fund cash balance), but in the next four years as projected by the CAO's chief financial analyst, Laura Schwartz, the budget shows a total deficit of $60 million, but that assumes a $20 million savings from the implementation of the multi-million dollar Fenix accounting system. Many experts in the county think the $20 million benefit from Fenix is a pipe dream as the CAO has yet to develop any work paper showing where and how this money will be saved.

So how did these deficits materialize? In the last three years the county at our CAO Terri Daly's recommendation added about 170 employees at an average salary and benefits of about

$80,000 a year. On top of that, Daly recommended that all county employees except sheriff's deputies (they have their own system of compensation increases) get a 15 percent raise over three years starting at the beginning of 2014. That's one way to buy loyalty. According to our county auditor and per the CFA's own budget projections, the county's salary and benefit expense will increase by about $14 million, which just about equals next year's deficit. This is typical of big government bureaucrats. But wait, there is more.

When our new and very perceptive Supervisor Shiva Frentzen asked the CFA what benefit did we get from all these new employees, Schwartz replied that we have a new senior day care center. I was advised that this new center employs about two people. So where were all these new people absorbed?

Yes, you guessed it; the CAO's office received the majority of this new staff. I don't care how many new analysts they have, they are doing a lousy job. As said before in the Balancing Act, if Daly is doing such a good job, why does she need two press/PR officers to brag about all her "good" work? The bottom line is that for all these new employees, the county service levels are about the same.

But wait there is more. There is a pattern here. As mentioned above, Daly as the former CAO of Amador County saddled them with a $20 million lease obligation over the next 14 years which they didn't need that has become an albatross. Daly did it through the consent calendar. And if that doesn't worry you, Daly wants the new sheriff's HQ to be acquired in a manner similar to the HHS lease in Amador, the most expensive way to do it. More on that in a later Balancing Act.

Daly hired Assistant CAO Kim Kerr, telling everyone what a lucky find. Kerr was about to get fired as city manager of the city of Ione. In a nutshell, Kerr took Ione in just four years from a positive fund balance of $8 million to a negative balance of about $1 million. The grand jury called her

incompetent or words to that effect. She didn't even reconcile the city of Ione's bank account for over two years. And so what did Daly do? Hire her and gave her a $10,000 raise in doing so. Now Kerr is making over $160,000 a year, plus benefits.

I am not done yet. Daly claimed in hiring our newest HR Director Pam Knorr that the top of the salary schedule was "only" $132K plus benefits and Knorr wouldn't take the job without more money. Reports from some of the employees of Alpine County where the unemployed Knorr was the previous CAO were less than glowing. But that didn't matter and Daly talked the then BOS into giving her about $160K a year plus benefits plus the coming raises.

Daly's excuse for all this unnecessary hiring? "We are just back at pre-recession levels." Hey, I got news for Daly, most people will tell you we are still in a recession. County revenues are going up a lot slower than inflation. Just last week at a bank (in El Dorado County), I asked the teller (making about $12/hour) when did he finish college? He said he graduated CSUS recently with a degree in accounting and couldn't get a job. Ask him if we are still in a recession.

Even our new county counsel was hired in at the highest pay step. Hey, what does Daly care, the money is OPM (other people's money) to her.

But there appears to be no recession if you work for El Dorado County. Ask an analyst who makes $110K plus benefits in the CAO's office.

Since corporate America went through the recession and many are still in it, there were massive layoffs. Many corporations found that productivity remained high and profits rose (why do you think the stock market is at 17,000? Corporations do better for their stockholders when they become leaner by trimming the fat.

When a corporate executive’s company loses money year after year, they get fired. You don’t give them a raise. Most of top management is removed. When a football, baseball or basketball team becomes a consistent loser year after year, sometimes just a bad losing streak within a season, do the players get fired? No, it’s bye-bye head coach, assistant head coach and/or manager. How many new coaches have the Sacramento Kings gone through in the last few years. The coaches make a huge difference with respect to a team’s performance.

The citizens of El Dorado county are the stockholders. They deserve better. If the CAO were an elected position, there would have already been a recall. But it’s up to our BOS, who have the power to hire and fire the CAO, to take this county in a new, more fiscally responsible direction. The bleeding needs to stop now before exsanguination kills us.

Oh, and Terri Daly’s salary? In a couple of years it will be over $220,000 a year plus benefits.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: Brown needed to sign SB930

To the community,

On Sept 19, I called on Gov. Jerry Brown to sign Senate Bill 930, urging his immediate signature on Senate Bill 930 to reinstate penalties for aggravated arson. The urgency legislation would reinstate provisions which were permitted to sunset on Jan. 1, 2014.

Brown signed the bill a day later.

The law authorizes increased penalties for criminals who commit large-scale, devastating arson crimes like the King Fire that is currently raging out of control through the Pollock Pines area.



Vern Pierson

Under the provision which lapsed on Jan. 1, 2014, a person convicted of aggravated arson, which includes arson causing $7 million in damage (including fire suppression costs), is subject to a penalty of 10 years to life in prison. To be clear, due to the constitutional prohibition against ex post facto laws, a person who commits arson is only subject to the penalties that are in place at the time that the offense is committed. Thus, the portion of the law that was permitted to sunset, specifically that suppression costs may be included in damage calculations, will not apply to the King Fire arson case.

The bill contains an urgency clause, so its provisions will take effect immediately upon the governor’s signature. Given that we in California are in the fourth year of a severe drought and in the midst of fire season, I respectfully joined with the authors of this bill and requested the governor’s immediate signature for SB930. I sent a letter to the governor requesting the same.

Here is a copy of the letter.

Vern Pierson, El Dorado County district attorney