Opinion: S. Tahoe is being fair to taxpayers, workers, retirees

By Hal Cole

Let me be candid. There is presently a noose around the city's neck titled "pension and health care" and unless we restructure the way these benefits are delivered it will choke our city's future.

We are not alone. Most cities are experiencing the same predicament. Those who address it head-on will survive, those who don't will go the way of Stockton, San Bernardino and Vallejo.



Hal Cole

Our past efforts to address our rapidly rising payroll costs included reducing other expenses by way of debt restructuring, layoffs, and tightening department budgets. In spite of the rapid rise in our employee benefits costs, we have still been able to present a balanced budget. Our actuaries today reveal that unless we address this issue now, we will be facing deficits again within a few years.

As we enter negotiations with our employees, we must partner with them and create a financially sustainable agreement that will allow us to refocus our attention on growing our economy

by way of reinvestment in our infrastructure.

Simply put, the problem is the taxpayers are essentially paying for two groups of workforces. One made up of current employees, the other retirees. Our city residents cannot pay the estimated $75 million it would cost to fully fund the health care and pension plans for both groups as they exist today. From our polling of other California cities, very few offer full medical insurance for their retirees. We did. We were told by experts at the time that medical costs would go up gradually and that the cost of the employee retirement program (PERS) was “superfunded” and would require no more contributions from either the employees or the employer. Neither of which was true.

Although we have no control over the state controlled retirement program, we can address our health care costs. The city of South Lake Tahoe is different than most other agencies insofar as we are self-insured. We arrange the plan and we pay the medical bills.

Not to be lost in this process is the commitment we made to our retirees. We must offer them the same plan we offer our current employees. This plan has changed over the years (increased deductibles, removal of prescription plans, increased co-pays, etc.) and our retirees have incurred the same modifications.

We are now offering our employees an option of plans. Employees and retirees will all receive a basic plan in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. The new program will allow both current employees and retirees the option to “buy up” their coverage to meet their family’s needs. Our employees are being asked to do something unique in public service. They are being asked to put the wellbeing of their city and its taxpayers ahead of their personal gain. So far many of them are willing to partner with us and we are negotiating as I write this piece.

I would ask our community to thank these employees as they recognize that we all, both in the private and public sector, must accept the new financial landscape we are entering. I am as optimistic as I have ever been for the future of our city.

I also want to thank our city manager and her staff as they have endured the months of negotiations and remind the community that is was with the unanimous and unequivocal support of the City Council that she initiated these discussions. Any complaints or criticism for these changes should be directed at the council and me. Without financial stability, we cannot deliver the services our residents deserve.

Hal Cole is mayor of South Lake Tahoe.

Letter: Tahoe Keys comes clean on dredging

Publisher's note: ***The following letter was sent Sept. 10, 2014, to Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association members. It was sent to Lake Tahoe News by a resident of the South Lake Tahoe community.***

To TKPOA homeowners,

I personally apologize for the misleading statements that I have made and that have been made by association management over the past three months regarding the timing of the West Channel dredging. Initially we did significant additional investigative work and modified our project based on discussions with the regulatory agencies; they gave us assurances that these efforts, which delayed the permit

application, would expedite permit approval. The assurances were honored by some of the agencies but other agencies treated the permit application with a “business as usual” approach which has resulted in the delays.

At this time we are waiting on permit approval for dredging (see details below). We recommend that boaters keep an eye on channel depth based on their individual needs to determine when it will be necessary to pull their boats out this Fall.

West Channel

Water depth in portions of the West Channel is approximately 3.5 feet.

We started work on obtaining a dredging permit in April 2014. The permitting process has been long and frustrating as Lake Tahoe has many layers of federal, state, and local regulatory agencies. Obtaining a permit to dredge the West Channel is dependent these agencies giving their blessing before the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) will issue us a permit. Here is the current status:

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board – This agency approved our project by letter dated September 8 following a 10-day public comment period on our project that ended on Sept. 6. They received no adverse. The Lahontan approval also includes the TRPA approval for the project.

California State Lands Commission – This agency notified us on Sept. 8 that they have decided that their approval of our project requires Commission concurrence. The next Commission meeting is Oct. 14 and, if approved, they will notify ACE after that. This was unanticipated and is a major setback for completing the dredging this year.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife – This agency is considering whether additional studies are needed for the project. We are actively pursuing an answer from them. The

timing of their action and its impact on our project timing is unknown.

Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) – We have been working with this agency to overcome their contention that our project cannot be approved under the Nationwide Permit covering this type of work. We know of at least three other approvals given in the Lake Tahoe Basin that directly contradict their position. If it is covered, they can issue a permit when all of the other agencies have given their approval (e.g. sometime after mid-October). If it is not covered, then it will take an additional 90 days or longer to obtain approval.

The bottom line is that we will not be able to start dredging before the middle of October at the earliest and it is possible that we will not be able to start before Spring 2015. It is important to note that any and all of this is subject to change at the whim of the myriad of federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the Lake Tahoe Basin.

East Channel

Water depth in portions of the East Channel is approximately 2 feet.

Tahoe Keys Marina (TKM) told us [Sept. 10] that they intend to submit their application to dredge the East Channel by Sept. 19. The East Channel dredging is a much larger project that is estimated to cost $1.5 to $2 million. While our application for the West Channel has paved the way for the review of their application, they will likely run into the same hurdles and the same timeframes for approval. At this time, it appears unlikely that they will do the large scale dredging in 2014 and they may be able to do a limited dredging project in the channel area between the sheet pile bulkheads. TKM told us they intend to complete the dredging in Spring 2015 if it cannot be completed this year.

TKM, under our 1991 Settlement Agreement, is responsible for

taking the lead role in dredging the East Channel. The options available to TKPOA range from seeking court action to enforce the 1991 Settlement Agreement which requires TKM to take the lead on any dredging project to working with Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association to get the channel dredged in Spring 2015. The later option includes the risk that recovering TKM's portion of the cost (approximately $1 million) may entail legal action.

Contingency plans

In the event that neither channel dredging is completed this fall, there are two options for boat owners to consider. For boats that use the West Channel (moored in the Main Lagoon to the west of Ala Wai Boulevard), the owners can take them out at either Cave Rock or Obexer's Marina both approximately 10 miles from the Tahoe Keys by water. If there are problems with these locations or water levels fall further, TKPOA may open one of the lagoon maintenance ramps for its members use. For boats moored in the Marina Lagoon (east side of Ala Wai Boulevard), the owners can take them out at TKM.

John Larson, TKPOA president

Letter: Fireworks cleanup thank you

To the community,

The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority would like to thank all of our community members, visitors, businesses and agencies who have helped keep our Lake Tahoe beaches clean throughout a busy summer season. Debris on Lake Tahoe's beaches affects

everyone’s enjoyment of the lake, and trash and debris on the beaches and streets can easily find its way to the lake and adversely impact lake clarity, water quality and wildlife.

Public participation is part of basinwide environmental stewardship initiatives. The LTVA continues to move forward with the entire community to contribute clean up resources through Team Fireworks. The site provides visitors and residents information on how to recognize and report potential fireworks debris and generate immediate response if suspected. The LTVA has established a hot line (775.410.0417) and an email address (teamfireworks@ltva.org) to communicate information on debris. If someone finds what they suspect might be an unexploded shell, they are to call 911.

To help with cleanup efforts, go online.

Special thanks to: American Airlines, Terry Azevedo, Basecamp Hotel, The Bigley Family, BrickLance Pickup Service, Star Brooks, California Conservation Corps, The Carter Family, City of South Lake Tahoe, Deb Howard Realty, Douglas County Search & Rescue, Douglas County, Edgewood Tahoe, Elks Point Homeowners Association, Hansen Management & Maintenance, Harrah’s and Harveys’ H.E.R.O.’s, Rod Hogan, Inn by the Lake, The Julber Family, K&K Services, Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe, Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation, Jason Laurie, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Lora McKay, Marla Bay Homeowners Association, Marriott, The Mork Family, OnCourse Productions, Round Hill Pines Resort, Pacific Crest Gallery, Pinewild Homeowners Association, Pedego, K Prigian, Lynn Peterson & Cherise Smith, Scotty’s Hardware, Leonard Smith, Soroptimist members of South Lake Tahoe, South Lake Tahoe Boy Scout Troops 468 & 594, South Lake Tahoe Yacht Club, South Tahoe Kids Camp, South Tahoe Refuse & Recycling, Tahoe Blue Vodka, Tahoe Chamber, Tahoe Douglas Rotary, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, Tahoe Wellness Cooperative, The Truxler Family, The Landing Resort, US Bank, U.S. Forest Service – Tahoe Basin

Management Unit, Weidinger Public Relations, Douglas Williams, and Zephyr Cove Resort.

LTVA's mission is to drive tourism and awareness for Tahoe South through focused messaging. A critical part of that message has always been preserving lake clarity. The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, city of South Lake Tahoe, League to Save Lake Tahoe, U.S. Forest Service, South Tahoe Refuse & Recycling, and Douglas County have partnered to coordinate the Adopt-a-Beach program following the Fourth of July and Labor Day firework displays.

Georgette Riley, LTVA integrated marketing manager

Opinion: DA challenges media credibility

By Vern Pierson

On Sept. 5, the following letter to the editor was submitted to and received by the *Sacramento Bee:*

A June 2014 Gallup Poll confirms that Americans have lost confidence in the news media. Across newspapers, TV, and the Internet, confidence is less than 22 percent. In fact, confidence in newspapers has declined by more than half since its peak of 51 percent in 1979. These results are not surprising given that the reporting of news far too often seeks to enflame, influence, or entertain the reader, rather than to inform them of the actual facts.



Vern Pierson

On Sept. 3, the *Sacramento Bee* ran an editorial endorsing a candidate for El Dorado County Board of Supervisor's District 2. As part of that endorsement, the *Bee* erroneously, and without any factual support, asserted that the prosecution and conviction of former Supervisor Ray Nutting was politically motivated. The *Sac Bee* editorial staff is entitled to their own opinion, however uninformed, but not to their own facts.

Let's be clear about the facts: prior to the indictment of Ray Nutting, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office contacted the California Attorney General's Office and presented the evidence of the case to a deputy attorney general – a career white collar crime prosecutor who was involved in the early public corruption investigation of the city of Bell officials. It was after these initial meetings that the joint decision was made by the Attorney General's Office, a state agency, and the DA's Office, a county agency, to move forward with the case by presenting it to an El Dorado County Grand Jury. Prior to the grand jury, the Attorney General's Office and the DA's Office reached out to Mr. Nutting and his attorney to request any and all exculpatory evidence to present to the grand jury.

Everything presented by Mr. Nutting and his attorney was given to the grand jury in May 2013. Further, Mr. Nutting was given an opportunity to present his side of the case and testify before the Grand Jury, yet he chose to take the Fifth and refused to testify.

Then in May 2013, the grand jury, made up of 19 members of the

public and selected at random, heard the evidence and indicted Ray Nutting. After the indictment, a judge set Mr. Nutting's bail at $55,000 (which is the bail schedule amount for the crimes he was indicted on) and signed a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Nutting, who was well aware of his pending arrest for weeks before the indictment. Mr. Nutting broke the law when he obtained loans from county employees and a public works contractor.

His wife, the person now endorsed by the *Sac Bee*, then showed up to the jail with 550 $100 bills to pay his bail in cash. The jury convicted Ray Nutting of six criminal counts related to these illegal loans. In its inexplicable support for Nutting, the *Sac Bee* has refused in two separate editorials to acknowledge the active participation throughout the trial of the California Attorney General 's Office in the prosecution and conviction of Ray Nutting. The first time the *Bee* did this was while the Nutting jury was still deliberating on a verdict – in what appeared to be a blatant attempt to influence the jury verdict. Now, the *Bee* once again ignores the involvement of the Attorney General's Office in an apparent effort to prop up their endorsement of a candidate.

Notably, in another recent local political corruption case involving school board member Cortez Quinn – with facts eerily similar to the Nutting case as it involved submitting false documents under penalty of perjury and $55,000 in illegal loans – the *Sac Bee* demanded that Quinn resign on Nov. 7, 2013, less than 48 hours after his arrest. Why the immediate condemnation within 48 hours of arrest for one politician, and yet the ardent support for another politician long after his conviction and removal from office?

The involvement of the Attorney General's Office in the prosecution and conviction of Ray Nutting is of great significance. Absence any evidence in support, the *Bee* trashes the integrity of career prosecutors at the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office with false claims of a politically

motivated prosecution. The *Bee* is keenly aware that it is much easier to impugn local prosecutors and make false claims than it would be to make the same assertions against the California Attorney General's Office. What is the attorney general's motivation to prosecute a small time supervisor in a relatively small California County? The answer is – there isn't one. The *Bee* ignores this fact again and again.

Why does the *Bee* ignore the fact that Ray Nutting never filed a motion to recuse the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office? The answer is – because he would have lost that motion as the prosecution of former supervisor Nutting was not politically motivated. Why does the *Sac Bee* blatantly ignore these facts in two separate editorials? Is it based upon the relationship of Ray Nutting to a *Sac Bee* employee? Is it just an attempt to sell more newspapers claiming there is some political feud up in El Dorado County? Or, is it just another example of the shoddy journalism that is causing Americans to lose confidence in the media?

Regardless of the reason, the message to dedicated career prosecutors across the region considering whether or not to investigate or file charges against the politically powerful is that their actions will be evaluated by the *Sacramento Bee* in an uninformed and biased manner. Prosecutions of political figures are never taken lightly. The facts and law are often complicated. The defendant is often a charismatic popular person. The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office did exactly what should be done in the political corruption case of Ray Nutting. Investigate potential crimes. Involve the California Attorney General's Office in the case to have an additional objective and outside prosecutor involved in the case and evaluate the facts. Find a fair and impartial Judge to rule on the case. And, ultimately, give defendant Nutting his day in court in front of a jury of his peers.

Those jurors convicted Nutting, and the judge removed Nutting from office. The 3rd District Court of Appeal and recently the

California Supreme Court have affirmed the order removing Nutting from office. As noted by the American Bar Association, “The duty of a prosecutor is to seek justice, not merely convict.”

There’s more to being a prosecutor than getting a conviction. Every prosecutor in our office understands our role is first and foremost the pursuit of justice. Justice sometimes means the dismissal of a factually provable offense and other times it’s holding accountable the politically powerful. The latter is precisely what happened in this case.

Vern Pierson is district attorney for El Dorado County.

Opinion: Pay attention around school buses

By National Transportation Safety Board

As a brand new school year begins, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reminds parents, students and motorists to be alert and to put safety first in school zones and near school bus stops.

School buses are the safest means of transportation for getting to and from school and keep an estimated 17.3 million cars off the roads every year. Even so, students need to be careful when entering the “school bus danger zone” – 10 feet in front, behind or on either side of the bus. In addition, motorists need to be alert and always stop for a school bus when flashing lights are illuminated.

According to NHTSA data, over the past 10 years, 44 school-aged children and teens between the ages of 5-19 were killed in school zones traveling to or from school. Out of that number 77 percent (34) were pedestrians either struck by a school bus or another vehicle.

Teach children how to stay safe around a school bus:

• Stand at least six feet (three giant steps) from the approaching school bus while waiting at the bus stop.
• Wait to board the bus until the driver says it is safe.
• When getting off of the bus, cross the street in front of the bus and make sure the bus driver sees you.
• Always watch for oncoming traffic when approaching or leaving the bus.

How motorists can keep kids safe around the school bus:

• When driving in neighborhoods with bus stops, schools and school zones, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
• Slow down. Look for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood.
• Remember, children do not easily estimate vehicle speeds and often misjudge when it is safe to cross the street when a vehicle is approaching.
Learn and obey the school bus laws. Obey the “flashing signal light system” that school bus drivers use to alert motorists of pending actions:
• Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
• Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped, and that children are getting on or off. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start driving again.

Opinion: Plastic continues to choke oceans

By Charles J. Moore, New York Times

LOS ANGELES – The world is awash in plastic. It's in our cars and our carpets, we wrap it around the food we eat and virtually every other product we consume; it has become a key lubricant of globalization – but it's choking our future in ways that most of us are barely aware.

I have just returned with a team of scientists from six weeks at sea conducting research in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – one of five major garbage patches drifting in the oceans north and south of the Equator at the latitude of our great terrestrial deserts. Although it was my 10th voyage to the area, I was utterly shocked to see the enormous increase in the quantity of plastic waste since my last trip in 2009. Plastics of every description, from toothbrushes to tires to unidentifiable fragments too numerous to count floated past our marine research vessel Alguita for hundreds of miles without end. We even came upon a floating island bolstered by dozens of plastic buoys used in oyster aquaculture that had solid areas you could walk on.

Plastics are now one of the most common pollutants of ocean waters worldwide. Pushed by winds, tides and currents, plastic particles form with other debris into large swirling glutinous accumulation zones, known to oceanographers as gyres, which comprise as much as 40 percent of the planet's ocean surface – roughly 25 percent of the entire earth.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Land and Water Conservation Fund, Wilderness Act turn 50

By Mike Boots and John Podesta

Fifty years ago this week, President Lyndon Johnson signed two landmark bills, ushering in a new era of conservation.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act codifies the simple premise that when we take something from the earth, we have a responsibility to give something back. Using revenues from offshore oil and gas development, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has made critical investments in nearly every county in the United States. The LWCF has been used to increase access to the outdoors for hunting, fishing, and other recreation, to protect iconic places like National Parks and Civil War battlefields, and to advance over 40,000 local projects.

Thanks to the Wilderness Act, more than 109 million acres of wild land have received our country's strongest protections, ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy these places as they are today, and as they were hundreds of years ago. Designated wildernesses promote clean air and water, provide habitat for iconic wildlife, and protect places of incomparable natural beauty for all Americans to experience and enjoy.

But more than that, these laws protect what the novelist Wallace Stegner called "the geography of hope," a vision of the American continent in all its vastness, its wildness, its natural power. "Something will have gone out of us as a people

if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed," Stegner wrote in 1960. "We need wilderness preserved – as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds – because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed."

Protecting the outdoors is not just good for our air and water – it's good for our economy. In 2012, over 900 million visits to national parks, national monuments, and other federally managed lands and waters helped support over $646 billion in spending on outdoor recreation.

But our work to conserve America's great outdoors is far from over. Right now, too many Americans lack easy or safe access to parks. Climate change is placing new stresses on lands, waters, and wildlife. Too many of our rivers, lakes, and ecosystems are choked with pollution.

That's why President Obama has called on Congress to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and to act on dozens of conservation proposals that have been introduced by Democrats and Republicans alike. In the meantime, the President will use his executive authority to protect our outdoors and our heritage by designating new national monuments – as he has 11 times so far.

As we mark the anniversary of these important laws, let's celebrate what we have accomplished over the past 50 years and redouble our efforts to work together to preserve the wild places that define the American character and to leave behind a healthy, beautiful country for future generations.

Mike Boots is the acting chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. John Podesta is counselor to the president.

Opinion: More officers on duty to combat crime

By Brian Uhler

Several South Lake Tahoe businesses were disrupted over the past three months (June-July-August) by 19 smash and grab commercial burglaries. Typically, these burglaries are occurring between 3-9am.

The offender(s) have broken windows or glass doors to gain access to these businesses across town. The crimes have not been centralized in any one particular area, although several have occurred in the area of the Y and some businesses have been victimized more than once. After forcing entry, the thief or thieves grab a variety of products such as cigarettes and alcohol.



Brian Uhler

If you know of anyone who has an unusual amount of cigarettes or alcohol or if you have other information, please call the police department (530.542.6100), or the Secret Witness program (530.541.6800).

Another summer time crime trend we have identified has involved auto thefts. Although there have been several vehicles stolen throughout the summer months, we have noted a unique sub-trend of the theft of utility trailers. These trailers, some enclosed and others open, are commonly used to

store tools and equipment for construction and other types of labor projects. There have been five of these trailers stolen this year. At least one of the stolen trailers has been recovered.

During August we were able to add some staffing to the police department. Two police officers and four public safety dispatchers were hired to replace current vacancies in the police department. Two of the dispatchers will be serving par -time, which represents a staffing improvement funded by 9-1-1 service fees.

We have received many comments of support for the department's efforts to help control the illegal cultivation of marijuana. We have taken enforcement action against four illegal residential marijuana grows in the past month. On Sept. 16, the City Council will be receiving additional information about ways to control the unchecked growth of marijuana commerce in South Lake Tahoe. The main point for this effort is to promote safety.

Brian Uhler is South Lake Tahoe's police chief.

Opinion: Liberty Utilities ratepayer rip-off scheme

By Roger Patching

You are about to be ripped-off big time by your local electric company, Liberty Utilities (LU). But, if you act now, we might be able to stop it. We're going to try to simplify what LU wants to hide in technical smoke and mirrors. The rip-off amounts to more than $50 million distributed among only 49,000

ratepayers.

First of all, newly created LU is not your standard utility like PG&E or SMUD. It is wholly owned by a Canadian holding company (Algonquin Power and Utility Company) that raises investor funds (Wall Street) to buy energy projects, particularly lucrative renewables. Their primary concern is not to serve as a publically regulated utility, but to produce big profits for investors through the manipulation, most recently, of vulnerable little utility monopolies it acquires.

The way it works isn’t complicated. The subsidiary company (LU), at the behest of its parent (Algonquin), tries to sell the regulatory California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) the notion that it needs an “upgrade” when it doesn’t. If approved, LU’s owner issues stock on the promise of high growth and/or LU borrows the project money from its parent (Algonquin). The project costs and financing are passed to the ratepayers. It has little to do with building to meet energy demands, but rather for enhancing the parent’s balance sheet.

And since the engineering doesn’t exist to justify expansion, the sales pitch is by corporate attorneys using fabricated figures instead of actual science. We, and other nonprofits, led by the North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance (NTCAA) have challenged the false claims. The worry, however, is that LU’s scheme might succeed with the CPUC unless more of you get involved. The unnecessary “upgrade” has to do with North Tahoe/Truckee.

The issue and their sales pitch: Power runs in a loop between Truckee and North Tahoe. Imagine a clock with Truckee at 12, Northstar at 2, Kings Beach at 5, Tahoe City at 7, and Squaw/Alpine at 9. The power runs in a circle both ways so that even with a break somewhere in the line power would still be delivered in either direction. Most of the loop operates at 60kV. And with residential growth the capacity could be increased with new lines. Sound simple? It’s meant to. This

idea was introduced by Sierra Pacific Power (SPP) in 1996 when it projected 54 percent growth in 15 years. It didn't happen! While Truckee grew there was essentially no growth on the loop. Ignoring this historical fact, the same plan to rebuild the entire loop is now being pitched as needed to serve Northstar/Squaw resorts as well as Martis Valley developments. The wise approach would be to take less expensive steps that upgrade the weakest part of the system first.

But no, LU and its parent don't want a simple and incremental project. That's not how they make money. They want to enlarge the entire loop line to 120kV at a cost of over $50,000,000. Especially egregious and unnecessary to rebuild now is the 625 line between Kings Beach and Tahoe City – which would cost half of the $50 million. Contrary to the well-honed narrative by LU, this line is already heavy duty and won't need to be updated for decades, if ever. Its current capacity already grossly exceeds what is needed for the North Shore. Moreover, increased building is not anticipated along this line because it falls in the basin under TRPA's jurisdiction, unlike Martis and the ski resorts.

This is the scheme we are fighting. Remember, when LU was part of SPP with 1.1 million ratepayers, any such infrastructure costs would be borne by all of them. Algonquin bought a tiny inexpensive portion (renamed LU) whose 49,000 ratepayers will now bear this cost. And most of them are absentee vacation homeowners in the basin who don't follow local affairs and are easy to frighten with fear tactics of mid-winter power outages. Environmentally, the unnecessary rebuilding of the North Shore's 625 line will also cause the removal of over 25,000 trees – the largest forest removal and road-building project in the basin in modern history.

Want more information, both general and technically detailed, proving that we don't need such a project? In spite of massive stonewalling by LU regarding data requests, we've got it. Learn more and whom to contact to halt this project by going

online.

Lastly, while we volunteer our time, our efforts to protect your property, quality of life, and pocketbooks are not accomplished without funding – like for the brilliant utility consultant who worked on this project. Contributions to us, NTCAA, and others are needed and appreciated. They can be done via our websites and U.S. mail.

Roger Patching is president/CEO of Friends of Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: 'California Comeback' hasn't helped everyone

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

As Gov. Jerry Brown runs for re-election, he has adopted "California Comeback" – voiced during his State of the State address in January – as his informal slogan.



Dan Walters

Not surprisingly, therefore, Brown's Employment Development

Department issued a report last week, keyed to Labor Day, crowing that California has recovered – numerically – all of the 1.3 million jobs it lost during the recession.

“California is helping lead the nation in solid job growth, which has enabled us to put the recession behind us,” said EDD Director Patrick W. Henning Jr.

A day later, the left-leaning California Budget Project released its annual Labor Day report and didn’t buy into the everything-is-rosy scenario painted by the governor and his minions.

It pointed out that while the job numbers have recovered, unemployment remains relatively high (tied for sixth-highest in the nation) because, since the recession began in 2007, California’s labor force has grown by more than 700,000 and “far more jobs are needed to account for those additional Californians who are searching for work.”

Read the whole story