Opinion: Time to improve community participation

By Scott Valentine

I recently wrote an article that highlighted a need for greater community involvement in city issues and I specifically cited the younger generation as being too busy and apathetic to get involved, and the older generation for not appreciating the value of new ideas and welcoming change. I applaud all of you who are doing your part to create positive improvements for our community regardless of age or qualifications. Of course everyone realizes I oversimplified my comments for effect. I'm not age-ist. I am trying to illustrate that change on all sides, and on all accounts is necessary.

Scott Valentine

I openly welcome praise and criticism of my last article (or even this one). My intent is to incite action from those who feel they are underrepresented, be it our youth, members of our Latino community, or even those in our progressive older population who are tired of being lumped in with the people who are fine leaving our town the way it is. The barrage of emails and phones calls I received all had a common theme: People said, "You're right, I recognize we have a problem, what next, and how do I get more involved?" Excellent. Where do we begin?

I’m not claiming to have all the answers, but here are just a few suggestions:

Move City Council meetings to nights. If Sacramento can conduct all of their council business from 6 to 9pm, why can’t we? This would hopefully accomplish three things: 1) it would force city staff and council to be more efficient with their time (yes, we could all benefit from that), 2) it would allow a vastly different demographic to run for City Council at the next election, and 3) it would allow people the opportunity to participate in city issues after work, thereby increasing the likelihood of public involvement and community guided decision-making. Of course I understand that we live in a town where a lot of people work at night and we wouldn’t be satisfying all groups. We also run the risk of people not showing up anyways, no matter what time it is … it’s Tahoe, people are recreating and working three jobs and will most likely be too tired to care at the end of the day … but it might be worth a shot.

Paid positions. If you want even a more radical approach, maybe we should think about paying our council. We are a small town with a small budget and this might not be feasible, but if this was someone’s full-time job instead of a volunteer position we might be able to get a lot of work done in a short amount of time. It would also open the doors for a different pool of applicants when election time rolls around. Someone who is trying to raise a family while holding down multiple jobs might see this as a way to live their Tahoe lifestyle and make positive contributions to the community at the same time. Could it also lead to abuse of taxpayer funds … maybe … you’d have to weigh the options.

Get informed. If we seriously want to create community improvements that are based upon public involvement and input, information dissemination is probably the most important part of the equation. We need a “one-stop-shop” for all of our favorite Tahoe issues. Posting on the city website or on *Lake Tahoe News* is not enough. There needs to be a site where you can instantly see a community calendar of events and important meetings that are happening regionwide. Ideally, it would be a place where you could log in, select the issues that are most important to you, and be instantly emailed/Tweeted/Facebooked about upcoming events. It would be great if the information came to you and was catered to your interests. TahoeFuture.org can help keep you informed. It was initially created to provide information on the TRPA Regional Plan Update and it has since been adapted to serve community needs and provide information on Tahoe issues. Hopefully, we will soon see some survey based functions so that our decision-makers can use the same site to see how the public feels about particular issues, thereby guiding them on how they should vote and create policy. Get informed. Get involved. Visit TahoeFuture.org.

Contact your representatives. I was recently appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission and I hope to get your input so that we can guide the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Help improve our quality of life, increase connectivity, and build a greater sense of community through our recreation facilities and events. Guide this master plan so that it reflects your future desires. I look forward to hearing from you so that we can better serve the needs of our residents and our visitors. valentine@ltcc.edu

Contact the city. If you have other great ideas on how to inspire or improve community participation (or you would like to get involved yourself), you can always contact our City Council or the city manager directly. They actually listen. We live in a small town. A lot is possible if you put forth the effort.

Change is a product of your involvement. Well focused complaints are OK, positive action is even better. Show you are proud of where you live and you are ready to do something about it. Shovel the sidewalk in front of your business, go to a public meeting, write an informed letter to Council, pick up the trash or the dog poop on your favorite trail, fix your dilapidated sign, tell a tourist where the best restaurants are, volunteer with TAMBA to build some mountain bike jumps, or show Chris Brackett that you are ready to take him on in the next Christmas light competition. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you are unqualified or inexperienced. You are capable of effecting positive change on a variety of levels. Our town is waiting.

Scott Valentine is the head of the Earth Science Department at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Letter: Tahoe events need to be in tobacco-free venues

To the community,

I would gladly help to support events like the Sierra Nevada Alliance's film festival, but I have chronic bronchitis and asthma which makes it impossible for me to enter a smoke-filled casino, let alone attend the film festival.

How can you hold this event in a toxic, smoke-filled casino? It is discrimination against people who have respiratory illnesses, heart conditions, and even people who just want to live a healthy life without exposing themselves to the 63 known cancer causing carcinogens, 4,000 to 8,000 toxic chemicals, and 619 deadly additives that are in secondhand tobacco smoke. There is a reason that the Surgeon General has stated “there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.”

It has been proven that secondhand smoke causes permanent heart and lung damage with even a small amount of exposure.

Why not hold this event in a clean, healthy, non-toxic environment like Heavenly Village Cinema? Or the community college?

There is no excuse for holding an environmentally friendly film festival in a venue filled with toxic air.

According to my friend who worked as head of research for the third largest tobacco company in the world, “If the tobacco industry were forced to list the ingredients on a package of cigarettes or cigars, you would not legally be able to throw them into a landfill.”

Each cigarette is a miniature toxic waste dump containing cadmium (battery acid), formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide (used to kill people in gas chambers during the war!), benzene, acetone, arsenic (rat poison), polonium 210 (radioactive), and nicotine (poison) to name just a few ingredients.

So why are you forcing all of your film-goers to attend a film festival in a toxic smoke-filled casino? Simply separating a room within a building is completely useless. The ventilation system carries all the gaseous matter throughout the entire building.

If you truly care about the environment, stop holding events in the toxic smoke-filled casinos. At the very least, you can encourage the casinos to go smoke-free along with the rest of the world. Entire countries are now smoke-free in all indoor areas including casinos. Yet here in Tahoe, all it takes is a bit of blood money from the murdering tobacco companies (aka the Gaming Association, etc.) and everyone ignores the fact that over 600,000 Americans died of smoking last year and 63,000 died prematurely from secondhand smoke last year.

Stop patronizing businesses that promote tobacco. Tobacco kills more people each year than all other causes of death. Please move the film festival to a place where everyone can go and see it. A non-smoking venue.

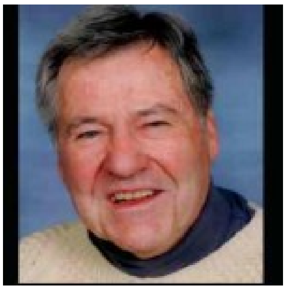
Diana Woodbury, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Tahoe Chamber vs. Sierra Club

To the community,

B Gorman, president of the Tahoe Chamber, has discovered evil. And it's the Sierra Club. Why the Sierra Club? Well, in Ms. Gorman's view the Sierra Club has filed a "frivolous" lawsuit that Gorman thinks is designed to prevent collaboration among stakeholders in the Tahoe basin.

Translated, the Sierra Club is opposed to the Regional Pan update, thus the lawsuit. In her newspaper statement Gorman raves that the Sierra Club is composed of elite nimbies, a select few that filed the lawsuit. Gorman suggest that they live in glass houses. She contends the lawsuit selfishly intends to halt progress in the Tahoe basin. Her rallying cry is people must "stand up to the elitist who wish to derail our community area plans that guide redevelopment."



Bill Crawford

It appears Ms. Gorman thinks she has the revealed word on the creation of the new Eden. However, the devil in the details is the Sierra Club. But the question for her is, how does one get collaboration with such as the Sierra Club when you call the group selfish, etc.? That the Sierra Club's agenda is to destroy your dream. We have to wait for a resolution on the lawsuit. If it goes to trial, the court may find some validity to the Sierra Club's position. If so, it won't be a frivolous lawsuit. But who knows? As Thomas Gore, the first elected senator from Oklahoma said, "Even a pancake has two sides.

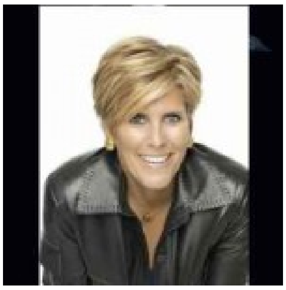
Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Gay Americans pay more taxes for fewer rights

By Suze Orman

That nine states and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage is encouraging progress for those of us who believe that everyone deserves to have basic civil rights. But, even if every state in the country could pass a similar legislation, it would not be enough. What we need is for our federal government to step up and make this basic right a law of the land.

Beyond the social discrimination, the refusal of our federal government to legally recognize same-sex marriages imposes steep financial penalties on same-sex couples. That two of the most costly penalties are triggered upon the death of one partner just adds to the ache of the senseless discrimination.



Suze Orman

I have been with my partner, Kathy Travis, for 12 years. If I am lucky I will spend the rest of my life living and sharing my joys and happiness with her. We have worked very hard as a team to save for our future together and consider everything we have as equally owned by the other.

If the federal government recognized same-sex marriage, then when one of us dies our assets would seamlessly transfer free of tax to the survivor. That's a basic right that every heterosexual married couple has.

But because there is no federal recognition of same-sex marriage, if I die first, or vice versa, before either of us can inherit what is now jointly our assets, there would be a federal estate tax bill that one of us would currently have to pay. Again, to be clear: If we were a heterosexual married couple, there would be no estate tax regardless of the size of the estate or who died first.

This spring, the Supreme Court will weigh in on the constitutionality of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. The Court needs to do the right thing and end discrimination against gay couples.

We all have 83-year-old Edith Windsor to thank for in pushing the issue of same-sex marriage equality on to the national front. Edie and her partner Thea were together for 40 years. How many marriages do you know that have lasted that long? But when Thea died in 2009, Edie was hit with a $363,000 federal estate tax bill because as a same-sex couple they were not eligible for the unlimited marital deduction. Are we really a nation that says it is fair and just to demand Edie pay a $363,000 penalty because she is gay?

There’s another penalty that’s even worse. Regardless of the size of their estates, every gay couple is discriminated against when it comes to Social Security benefits.

Married heterosexual couples can maximize their Social Security retirement benefits by taking advantage of the highest-earner’s benefit. When both spouses are alive, the lower earner can opt to collect a monthly benefit check that is equal to 50 percent of his or her spouse’s benefit. For many married couples, that 50% spousal benefit is often much higher than what the lower-wage-earning spouse could collect based on his or her own earnings record. Most important, when the high earner dies, the surviving spouse is allowed to collect 100 percent of the deceased’s higher benefit.

Because same-sex marriages aren’t recognized on the federal level, gay and lesbian couples are not eligible for Social Security spousal benefits. The lower earner cannot claim any benefits based on the higher earner’s benefit. A heterosexual couple married for just a few months is able to collect a federal benefit that same-sex couples who have been together for decades can’t. Are we really a nation that says that is fair?

Beyond those two glaring death penalties, health insurance is another area of severe federal financial discrimination against gay couples. I am so glad to see more employers extending health insurance benefits to same-sex partners. But because same-sex couples are not considered legally married under the eyes of the federal government, the dollar value of the health coverage is considered taxable income.

A 2007 study estimated that this gay health insurance penalty costs same-sex couples an aggregate $178 million ($1,069 per household), while employers paid an additional $57 million in payroll tax on that taxable income. No heterosexual married couple or their employers pay that penalty. Again, are we really a nation that says that is fair?

The social and civil discrimination that persists as long as our federal government does not recognize same-sex marriage is inexcusable. Add in the financial discrimination gay and lesbian couples face and the current policy becomes all the more indefensible.

Suze Orman is a personal finance expert and hosts “The Suze Orman Show” on CNBC. She is a bestselling author of ten books, including “The Money Class.” This first appeared on CNN.

Letter: Wyndham gives time to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to extend its appreciation to the Wyndham Vacation Ownership for their sponsorship of an Adopt A Day of Nourishment on Feb. 18 at St. Theresa Church parish hall. Their generous donation of $250 provided the funds for the food, supplies and utilities needed to provide the hot, well balanced meal that was served to over 80 guests.

Sue Harley, Robert Trew, Jason Clarke and Jennie Asdal of Wyndham. Photo/Provided

Bread & Broth was also pleased to have four enthusiastic Wyndham Vacation Ownership associates working side by side with B&B volunteers. One Wyndham associate was Jason Clarke, marketing manager, who "thought it was a rewarding experience helping the less fortunate of our community and we plan to do it again."

Joining Jason were his fellow associates Jennie Asdal, quality assurance rep; Sue Harley, recruiter; and Robert Trew, director of sales.

The sponsor volunteer crew did a great job packing give away bags and working on the dinner serving line.

As a nonprofit, non-denominational, all volunteer program, the efforts of B&B are contingent upon the generosity of individuals, organizations, churches and local businesses like Wyndham Vacation Ownership. Bread & Broth would like to thank Wyndham Vacation Ownership for their commitment to the South Lake Tahoe community and B&B's goal of feeding the hungry.

For more information on Bread & Broth's program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: California's pension system started out modest

By Steven Malanga

When California's government employee pension system was established in 1932, it was a model of restraint. Private-sector pensions were still rare then, but California lawmakers had a particular reason for wanting a public-sector pension system: Without one, unproductive older workers had an incentive to stay on the job and just "go through the motions" to get a paycheck, as a 1929 state commission put it. Pensions would encourage those workers to retire. The commission cautioned, however, against setting a retirement age so low that it would "encourage or permit the granting of any retirement allowance to an able-bodied person in middle life."

Accordingly, California set its initial retirement age for state workers (and, beginning in 1939, for local government employees) at 65, at a time when the average 20-year-old entering the workforce could expect to live for another 46 years, until age 66. The system's first pensions were modest, though far from miserly. An employee's pension equaled 1.43 percent of his average salary over his last five years on the job, multiplied by the total number of years he had worked. That formula typically provided longtime workers with pensions equal to half or more of their final salaries.

The pensions were funded by three sources: contributions from employers (that is, state and local governments); contributions from employees (though some governments opted to cover that expense); and money that the pension fund would gain by investing those contributions. With the 1929 stock market crash in mind, California opted for a cautious investment approach.

"An unsound system," the 1929 commission warned, would be "worse than none." The employees' contributions were fixed, so if investment returns weren't sufficient to fund the promised pensions, the employers' contributions would have to increase to make up the difference.

In the decades since, that cautious approach has been virtually abandoned as public employee unions have taken control of the system. The retirement age has been lowered, benefits have been increased and investments have become far riskier.

The major changes began in the late '60s, during a time of rapidly growing public-sector union power. In 1968, the Legislature added one of the most expensive of all retirement perks – annual cost-of-living adjustments – to CalPERS pensions. Other enhancements followed, including, in 1970, a far more generous pension formula that would allow an employee who worked for 40 years to retire at 60 and collect an annual pension equal to 80 percent of his salary. If he kept working for another five years, his pension fattened to 90 percent. In 1983, public safety workers got an even better pension formula, and the age at which they could start collecting was dropped to 55.

Not surprisingly, the costs of the enlarged pensions weighed heavily on California's budget. In 1991, with the nation mired in a recession and the state in a fiscal crisis, the Legislature closed the existing pension system to new workers, for whom it created a second tier. This less-expensive plan no longer required workers to make pension contributions, and it lowered the value of the pension to 1.25 percent of final average salary for every year worked; further, a worker couldn't begin to receive the pension until age 65.

But that economy lasted only until 1999, when the fund's board concocted an astonishing proposal that would take all the post-1991 state employees and retroactively put them in the older, more expensive pension system. The initiative went further, lowering the retirement age for all state workers and sweetening the pension formula for police and firefighters even more.

CalPERS wrote the legislation for these changes and then persuaded lawmakers to pass it. In pushing for the change, though, the pension fund downplayed the risks involved. A brochure about the proposal that CalPERS handed to legislators read like a pitch letter, not a serious fiscal analysis. It didn't mention that state law protected government pensions, so that taxpayers would be on the hook for any shortfall in pension funding. In essence, the CalPERS position was that government workers should carry zero risk, sharing the bounty when the fund's investments did well but losing nothing if investments went south.

During that period, many local governments tried to keep pace with the state, allowing earlier retirements, raising the percent of income paid upon retirement and decreasing contributions from employees.

The retirement system's projections that it could afford all these changes relied on an 8 percent return on the money it held, which proved impossible, in part because of the economic downturn and in part because of bad investment decisions. That has left governments on the hook to meet the shortfalls. CalPERS has delayed much of the reckoning by shifting costs down the line, but that only means government budgets are likely to be enslaved to pension debt for decades to come.

Already, local governments are taking a huge hit. Glendale, for example, has seen its annual pension bill rocket from $1.3 million in 2003 to $13.7 million in 2007. San Jose's tab almost doubled, from $73 million in 2001 to $122 million in 2007, and then rose even faster over the next three years, hitting a jaw-dropping $245 million in 2010. San Bernardino's annual pension obligations rose from $5 million in 2000 to about $26 million last year. The state budget took a massive hit too: Its pension costs lurching from $611 million in 2001 to $3.5 billion in 2010.

In August, California did pass modest pension reforms, which apply mostly to workers hired starting this year. But Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to reshape the board of CalPERS in a way that would have made it more responsive to taxpayer concerns did not make it into the reform legislation.

CalPERS' advocacy for higher benefits and its poor investment performance in recent years have locked in long-term debt in California and driven up costs, problems for which there are no easy solutions. As former Schwarzenegger administration economic advisor David Crane, a Democrat, has said of the fund's managers and board: "They are desperate to keep truths hidden."

Steven Malanga is senior editor of the Manhattan Institute's City Journal, from which this article is adapted. This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Opinion: More to 'husband' and 'wife' than just words

By Nathaniel Frank

Earlier this month, the leak of an internal memo revealed that the *Associated Press* advised its writers "generally" to call legally married gay spouses "partner" instead of "husband" or "wife."

The massive news agency, which sets the standard for many journalists worldwide, has it wrong; the default should be just what it is for straight married couples: "husband" and "wife." There's simply no rationale to use two different standards for gay and straight people who are legally married in their state.

AP has offered a wholly unsatisfying explanation for the usage distinction. Spokesman Paul Colford wrote last week that “husband” or “wife” “may be used in *AP* content if those involved have regularly used those terms.” Reached this week, he told me, “I expect we will have more to say on the subject before long. We’re listening and soliciting views.”

While *AP* has provided no clear rationale for its decision, presumably it believes that because same-sex marriage remains nationally contested, it is acceptable to call legally married gay spouses “partners.” Yet marriage is almost always governed at the state level.

True, the Defense of Marriage Act, passed by Congress in 1996, says the federal government does not recognize same-sex marriages. But no one seriously thinks that DOMA “unmarries” gay spouses; it simply denies them federal benefits. What’s more, the Justice Department, along with numerous legal experts, believe DOMA is unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court may shortly declare it so. At a minimum, *AP*‘s decision not to automatically use “husband” or “wife” for gay spouses in states where same-sex marriage is legal creates the perception that it is taking sides — and the losing side — in a culture war issue.

Nine states plus the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriage. *AP*‘s explanation suggests that it allows writers to use “husband” and “wife” if the parties involved make it clear that they use the terms, as though the editors are simply letting their subjects decide. But *AP* reporters probably don’t ask straight couples if they “regularly” use the terms; the agency, like the rest of the world, just employs the words without a second thought.

The point is, those who get married have already decided about terminology. They have chosen to become a husband or wife, and that’s what they deserve to be called. Failing to recognize this means failing to recognize what the gay marriage battle has been about: achieving equal dignity by accessing the same institutions and occupying the same symbolic spaces as everyone else.

Being “married” is, after all, a collective identity, in the same way “citizen” is. Both terms connote certain responsibilities, obligations and protections, as well as a sense of dignity and belonging for which there is no substitute. They confer equality on all those who occupy them. Using such a term fairly matters in the same way the front of the bus mattered to those banned from sitting there for no other reason than to designate them as second-class citizens.

Though *AP*‘s decision has not pleased gay advocates, it shouldn’t please opponents of same-sex marriage either. By suggesting that marriage is defined however each couple says it is, *AP* undercuts the power of the shared cultural definition of marriage, exactly what conservative opponents of same-sex marriage fear. It casts marriage as a subjective entity that could lose its power to delineate and help enforce our obligations to one another, a crucial part of its modern purpose.

Marriage used to function to regulate property (which included the women who were getting married), encourage and govern procreation and preserve religious and racial lines. But marriage today is far more about celebrating and enforcing people’s commitments to care for one another.

While many still cite procreation as the “reason” for marriage, law and society haven’t treated it that way for decades, as evidenced by granting marriage rights to those who don’t, can’t or won’t procreate. The power of the word “husband” or “wife” is that it can help guide people’s behavior during moments of weakness. Today, marriage is about personal responsibility, a cause conservatives ought to embrace.

If marriage matters at all, it should remain something that, despite its ever-evolving nature, also creates a collective identity with broadly embraced parameters. Yes, many Americans still want it defined to keep gay couples out. But with numerous polls showing majority support nationally for same-sex marriage, those Americans are losing the debate.

Equally important, the states that have legalized same-sex marriage have made their decision to make the one and only "marriage" – not some watered-down, back-of-the-bus version called "civil unions" – available to gay couples. And the individuals who have chosen to marry have made their decision to become husbands and wives. *AP*'s job is to reflect this reality without hesitation. Anything else is editorializing.

Nathaniel Frank is visiting scholar at Columbia's Center for Gender and Sexuality Law. This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Opinion: McClintock is wrong about corporate taxes

By Patrick Stelmach

Tax dodging is unfair and unpatriotic. The United States of America is home to the most successful corporations in the world, because we are the land of opportunity and equality.

However, these values and freedoms are being eroded by tax dodgers.

A small group of corporations exploit loopholes in our tax code by shipping profits to offshore bank accounts to avoid paying taxes, cheating the American people out of$150 billion a year. When anyone dodges taxes, it adds to the deficit and the burden imposed on hard-working, tax-paying Americans through cuts to education and other programs.

Volunteers with California Fair Share collect signatures. Photo/Provided

We can begin to balance our budget and build a stronger economy by closing tax loopholes and ensuring everyone pays their fair share.

Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, would rather keep giving tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy than properly fund our schools and support the middle class. During a town hall meeting Wednesday evening, I asked Rep. McClintock if he would close the corporate tax loopholes and put that money towards education and paying down the debt. Rep. McClintock said he would only end the loopholes if that money were given right back to those corporations through lowering tax rates.

All corporations should pay their taxes like the rest of us. If we close corporate tax loopholes and lower corporate tax rates by the same amount, as Rep. McClintock proposes, we are still letting corporations get away without paying their fair share in taxes.

While the top corporate tax rate is 35 percent, most corporations pay much less in taxes due to loopholes, deductions and subsidies. Total corporate federal taxes fell to 12.1 percent of profits earned from activities within the U.S. in 2011 — a 40-year low, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Some corporations, like General Electric, paid no taxes to the federal government for several years, because the company aggressively exploits loopholes and ships much of their profits to foreign bank accounts in countries like the Cayman Islands.

Across-the-board cuts, called the sequester, are set for March 1, a prospect that is scaring economists and local leaders alike. The sequester, it is estimated, will have numerous impacts, including a loss of one million jobs and small business loans reduced by $540 million.

With Congress trying to reach a compromise between Republicans and Democrats, Rep. McClintock should do everything within his power to ensure the final budget deal closes outrageous corporate tax loopholes to help reduce the deficit and pay for national priorities.

Patrick Stelmach is the state organizer for California Fair Share, a statewide, grassroots field and advocacy group, working to provide every Californian with a fair shot, make sure everyone pays their fair share, and that everybody plays by the same set of rules.

Letter: Is Lake Tahoe sustainable?

To the community,

In relationships, it takes the accumulation of many incidents to hit that “final straw”. In this case, four years of relentless attacks on a Nevada redevelopment project set to lead sustainable development, “broke the camel’s back”.

Nevada feels redevelopment abuse. California resents Nevada for the lion’s share of transient occupancy tax money. While Nevada has more per-existing buildable land, much of California infrastructure exist on stream environmental zones. “Unfair” sharing of these assets and liabilities, plus uneven regulatory representation escalated decades of unresolved tensions and resentments to the abyss of divorce.

The first exhale of severed obligations feels like freedom to do your own thing, without having to answer to that “oppressive, spoiled or controlling partner, because you showed ’em!” Then “in-laws” NEPA and CEPA weigh in, despite each states’ own development/mitigation playbook. And what about custody? Has anyone sat with the lake to explain why severing a 40-year collaboration for unknown repercussions is best?

After witnessing many of the inflictions still bleeding, I agree – a shift is in order. The TRPA regional update demonstrates motivation is high. But divorce? Really? Isn’t it hard enough to have a single source of the world’s most precious drinking water already under the diverse directives of 2 states, 5 counties, 1 city + 2 federal agencies? So further divide and polarize? In nature diversity works together to increase ecosystem stability.

Last year Sustainable Tahoe enrolled 15 NGOs, 12 agencies and 35 business from South Lake the Pyramid Lake to collaborate in showcasing our unique water, land, wildlife, culture and heritage. Together we created a regionwide demonstration of how prosperity with water clarity is possible! So before we pull further apart, consider what is at stake … one watershed with one majestic lake.

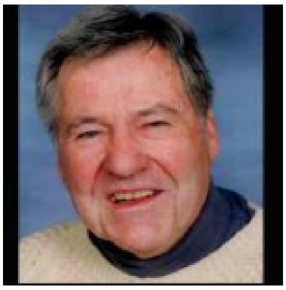
Jacquie Chandler, Sustainable Tahoe

Letter: South Tahoe on path to being ghost town

To the community,

Recently I reread Wallace Stegner's "Where the Bluebird Sings to Lemonade Springs." It's about living and writing in the West.

Also, I read Irving Stone's "Men to Match my Mountains." It's a big book about the winning of the far West.



Bill Crawford

Both books are in part about the periods of boom and bust in the far West, the gold and silver strikes. And when the strikes petered out, many towns died and were ghost towns. The books are about more than that. But the theme of boom and bust fits South Lake Tahoe.

I thought of the casinos across the state line. For me they are comparable to gold and silver strikes in the their boom times. Over time millions came here to gamble, strike it rich at the dice and card tables. But now the casinos are in major decline. The boom is dead. The bust is here. On the California side of the state line the casino bust is deeply felt. So are we becoming a far West ghost town? When I look around, it seems we are going down that rocky road.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe