Letter: The disorder of government

To the community,

Another year begins. Issa, the Japanese poet, said, “Old stupidities repeated, new errs invented.” Perhaps. It’s been a rough year for local government. The hit and run artist Tony O’Rourke left the city in a mess. And the mayor, Claire Fortier, made her contribution to political local disorder by waiting until after the City Council election to resign. Ill will to all.

Which brings me to the main point. In the Olmstead case, Justice Brandeis dissenting said, “Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher for good or ill, it teaches the whole people by its example.”



Bill Crawford

How true at the federal, state and local levels. By the behavior of government at all levels, we the people are left out of the picture. At all levels faction brawl over the cliff, over the loop road.

And who will be appointed to the vacant seat on the City Council? A new bone to chew on. Thanks Claire, we needed that. Seems like the Ouija board in control.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

PS: About three years ago Claire Fortier’s dog bit me. Fair warning, I guess. No, I didn’t sue. Claire and her spouse brought over a good bottle of red wine. All’s well that ends ….

Opinion: Will legislators create a reserve with the surplus?

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

A half-decade ago, as California’s economy was being hammered by a severe recession and the state budget was awash in red ink, then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislators created a blue-ribbon commission to study revenue “volatility” and recommend ways to offset it.

The state had experienced wild swings of revenue for years, and its politicians, including Schwarzenegger, had compounded their effects by overspending periodic windfalls, only to see serious deficits when revenues later declined.



Dan Walters

Creation of the “Commission on the 21st Century Economy” was an implicit admission that politicians, on their own, were incapable of curbing that irresponsible tendency.

However, the commission, headed by wealthy businessman Gerald Parsky, divided into two camps.

One, headed by Parsky, advocated changes in the tax system to reduce volatility – reducing the very high proportion of taxes paid by a few wealthy Californians whose incomes were especially volatile, and placing more load onto middle-income taxpayers.

The other, more liberal faction said that such tax changes would be unfair to the nonwealthy. It advocated, instead, mitigating the effects of volatility, if not volatility itself, by diverting windfalls into reserves that could then be tapped to avoid deficits when revenues dropped.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Delta tunnels would be a boondoggle

By John Garamendi

California’s aging water infrastructure is insufficient for our present and future needs. Unfortunately, the current Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and its two massive tunnels is a destructive $25 billion boondoggle that won’t solve the problem.

California can solve its water needs and end the water wars that pit north vs. south and water exporters vs.

environmentalists – but not with the BDCP.


John Garamendi

California needs a comprehensive water plan that generates new water and is focused on six priorities:

1) New water storage infrastructure,

2) Water conservation,

3) Water recycling,

4) Fixing the Delta with levee improvements, habitat restoration, and a right sized conveyance,

5) A science-driven process,

6) The protection of existing water rights.

If the BDCP moves forward, two tunnels will be constructed near Sacramento with the capacity to move 15,000 cubic feet per second.

To accommodate this massive plumbing project, we would sacrifice prime agricultural land, destroy legacy Delta communities, and potentially suck our Delta dry.

At a minimum cost of $24.5 billion, it’s extraordinarily expensive for California taxpayers and water ratepayers.

Delta farmers, fishermen and recreation businesses would see their livelihoods destroyed to benefit powerful corporate agribusinesses operating on desert lands in part of the San

Joaquin Valley.

We need to develop surface and underground water storage systems. Sites Reservoir north of Sacramento could be built and Los Vaqueros reservoir could be expanded at an estimated cost of $4.8 billion creating the capacity to store 1.9 million acre feet of water and providing up to 700,000 acre feet of water to use each year.

The San Louis dam could be repaired and expanded as could Shasta Dam. New reservoirs could be built at Los Banos Grandes and other off stream sites throughout the Central Valley. The underground aquifers of the Central Valley offer enormous storage when used in a conjunctive management system.

The quickest and cheapest new water source is conservation. The California Department of Water Resources estimates that robust conservation efforts in urban water use could save 1 million acre-feet of water each year by investing $530 million.

In addition to urban conservation, we must also look to agricultural water users to conserve water. California's $40 billion agricultural economy needs a sustainable water supply and the technology already exists to conserve 3 million acre-feet of water each year at a cost of $1.2 billion over 10 years.

Each year, 3.5 million acre-feet of treated water is dumped into the Pacific Ocean by cities in the Los Angeles Basin. How foolish to pump water 500 miles, clean it, use it once, clean it to a higher standard than the day it arrives, and dump it in the ocean. One million acre-feet could be recycled and stored in the underground aquifers in Southern California at a cost of $1.3 billion. Similar projects must be done in Northern California. Desalination of ocean water can also add to our supplies.

With adequate investment and implementation, urban and

agriculture conservation, recycling programs and new storage could create approximately 5.7 million acre feet of new water to use each year at a projected cost of $7.8 billion.

Any plan that doesn't include levee improvements in the Delta is a plan awaiting disaster. The BDCP will spend $25 billion, but not one dime to secure the Delta levee system that is necessary for delivering half of the anticipated water supply. How foolish and short sighted. The key Delta levees could be secured at an estimated cost of $1 billion.

The BDCP skips all of these important sources of increased water supply. It's a $25 billion boondoggle that won't create a single drop of new water for California.

The BDCP plan for habitat restoration is well intentioned, but too extensive and expensive. The plan calls for as much as 145,000 acres of valuable Delta farm land to be converted to wildlife habitat. Every scientific study done thus far doubts the potential of this $10 billion proposal to restore and maintain the endangered fish in the Delta, yet the BDCP moves forward as if money is no problem.

After investing in conservation, recycling, storage and Delta levees and carefully monitoring their progress, it might be necessary to construct a much smaller Delta water delivery facility.

A 3,000 cubic feet per second facility could operate year round delivering 2 million acre-feet water to the pumps in Tracy and on to the south.

Instead of destroying heritage communities and Delta farm land, this facility could use the existing 25 mile long Sacramento Deep Water Shipping Channel for water deliveries to a short 12 mile pipe connected to existing channels leading to the Tracy pumps. This could save billions of dollars while preserving the economy and communities of the Delta.

Providing a foundation for these projects is the protection of existing water rights. If we are going to build any project, these rights must be honored.

Stop the $25 billion BDCP boondoggle and use that money on water conservation, recycling, storage, fixing the Delta, a balanced habitat program, and a small Delta facility.

California could create up to 5.7 million acre-feet of new water at half the cost of the $25 billion tunnel plan, solve its water crisis, and avoid a fruitless time consuming water war. Only by embracing a comprehensive plan can we avoid this gridlock.

It's time to move forward and ensure a reliable water supply for the entire state.

John Garamendi represents Northern California's 3rd Congressional District. He served as a state senator, lieutenant governor, insurance commissioner and as President Bill Clinton's deputy interior secretary.

Opinion: Time to take action to prevent cervical cancer

By Kelly Shanahan

It doesn't have the pink ribbons and 5K runs of October (breast cancer awareness month), but January is just as important: it is cervical health awareness month. More than 12,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2013 and 4,000 will die.

This statistic is especially tragic because cervical cancer is

a preventable disease. Ninety-nine percent of cervical cancer is caused by a sexually transmitted virus, the human papilloma virus, better known as HPV. HPV is a large family of viruses, with about 100 members. Some types of HPV cause common warts, others genital warts, and one particular branch of the HPV family – high risk HPV – actually causes cancer – cervical, vaginal, anal and even mouth and throat cancers.

While cervical cancer is the best know, and obviously can only affect women, approximately 30 percent of oral cancers are caused by HPV, and this affects men and women. HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact. It can infect anyone who has had any type of sexual or intimate encounter; it does not require exchange of bodily fluids.



Kelly Shanahan

HPV can be contracted with one sexual encounter, remain dormant and only be detected years later. Because the strains of HPV that cause cervical cancer are different than the ones that cause visible warts, HPV can unknowingly be passed to a sexual partner.

It is estimated that 70 percent of people will come in contact with HPV during their life. When we are young, the immune system is stronger and may be able to completely eliminate the virus from the body – until a new partner brings a new strain of HPV into the picture. The older we are, the less likely it is that HPV will be eliminated completely. This is the reason that HPV testing is recommended at the time of a pap smear for women over 30.

Use of a condom 100 percent of the time with 100 percent of sexual acts – vaginal, anal, oral or even contact with the genitals without what we think of as intercourse (I call this "close to sex") – can decrease the odds of contracting HPV. One study showed that using condoms correctly with every sexual act could lower the HPV infection rate by 70 percent. But because HPV can infect areas that are not covered by condoms, condoms do not completely protect against HPV.

There is a vaccine available that if given before any type of sexual or intimate activity can protect against the two types of HPV that cause 90 percent of genital warts and the two types that cause 70 percent of cervical cancer. This vaccine, called Gardasil, is recommended for girls and boys and the first dose ideally is given between 11 and 12 years of age. Just think about it: if every young girl and young boy in this country were vaccinated prior to ever having sex, we would eliminate 70 percent of cervical cancer in one generation.

The Gardasil vaccine is a series of three shots given over the course of six months. It is covered by most insurance plans and many health departments and school districts offer it for low or no cost. Even if you have already had sex, the vaccine can be given up to age 26 – again to females and males. If someone has been sexually active already, there is a chance that exposure to one type of HPV covered by the vaccine may have already happened. If this is the case, the vaccine will not prevent problems caused by that strain, but odds are you haven't been exposed to all four strains so the vaccine can still provide great benefit.

For women, pap smears are the best way to screen for cervical cancer. The goal is to find abnormal cell changes – and monitor or treat them – before cancer develops. Because we understand much more about cervical cancer and how it develops – again 99 percent is caused by sexually transmitted high risk HPV – guidelines for pap smears have changed in recent years. A pap smear may not be necessary for every woman every year,

but a visit to your gynecologist annually is still recommended. As I tell my patients, “your job is to show up every year and my job is to figure out what you need.”

So this January, let’s pay attention to what we can’t see – the cervix – and remember to vaccinate early (girls and boys), get your pap smear regularly and have an HPV test when recommended by your doctor.

Together we can eliminate cervical cancer.

Kelly Shanahan is a board certified gynecologist who has been serving the women of Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley for 19 years. She offers HPV vaccination, pap smears, management of abnormal pap smears and counseling to help you learn how best to decrease your risk of HPV and other STDs. The mother of a teenaged daughter, she is committed to trying to wipe out HPV in her daughter’s lifetime. Call (530) 542.4961 or (775) 782.7300 to schedule your appointment.

Letter: Heavenly continues to help less fortunate

To the community,

On Dec. 10, Heavenly Mountain Resort once again funded and provided an Adopt A Day sponsor crew.

“It feels good to give to the community during the holidays,” said Jennifer Van Gilder, Heavenly’s senior regional group sales manager.

Van Gilder was joined by Adriann Kremer, catering and sales manager; Ashley Rojas, regional group sales manager; Shannon Proper, group sales coordinator; and Arnaud Robin, corporate lodging sales manager in assisting the regular Bread & Broth volunteers. Typically sponsor crew members help distribute food bags and serve dinner, drinks and desserts and experience first hand the good that is being done for the those who are in need of help.

Bread & Broth is a nonprofit, non-denominational, all volunteer organization which is dependent upon the generosity of individuals, churches, clubs/organizations and business in the South Lake Tahoe community. The $250 donated by an evening's sponsor provides a nutritious meal and covers all the supplies and utilities needed for the meals preparation.

Thanks to Heavenly Mountain Resort and all our generous donors, Bread & Broth has been serving meals to all who attend every Monday evening at St. Theresa Church's parish hall for over 23 years.

For more information on Bread & Broth donation and volunteering opportunities, please contact me at (530) 542-2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Editorial: Stop the name calling or the comment

section on Lake Tahoe News will go away

The world seems to be in a sad, angry and distrustful state of mind.



We live in a time when in 2012 more active U.S. troops took their lives than died fighting in Afghanistan, according to the Military Suicide Report.

In 2012, 70 journalists died. The record was 74 in 2009. That might not sound like much, but there was a time when journalists' notebooks were like a white flag of neutrality. Not so anymore. These unarmed chroniclers of truth are seen as having an even more dangerous weapon than a gun – that of a pen, a computer, a microphone, a cell phone.

While journalists have long been held in low-esteem right along with attorneys, the fourth estate has also had a special status of being a non-combatant. Not so much anymore.

We are hurting each other with weapons and words.

People say they hate all the negative news. We say there is no such thing as negative or positive news – there is just news.

However, *Lake Tahoe News* knows we are bringing a good deal of negativity to you via the comments.

Without counting the positive, negative and neutral comments on *Lake Tahoe News*, we know the negative run rampant and overshadow and the other comments. The negativity isn't what is so grating and unnerving, it's the anger and venom that are spewed that are both disheartening and alarming.

No one is going to agree with everyone all of the time. But that doesn't make the other person's opinion less valid. Nor does it make that person an idiot or some other name for having that opinion.

Sure, it's easy to tell someone to not read the comments if they don't like what is being said. But isn't that in some way punishing the people who want to contribute in a meaningful way and rewarding the nasty commenters?

Lake Tahoe News, and any site for that matter, does not have to allow comments. We've done a lot of thinking about whether comments are good or bad for the news site. For now, the good outweighs the bad. We like when conversations are elevated, new information is brought forward and divergent opinions are presented in a thoughtful manner.

But as we go forward with a redesign of the news site, we are giving serious thought to not allowing comments in the future. It will be up to the commenters – basically how you behave between now and when we pull the trigger on the redesign – as to whether comments will be a component in the next incarnation.

The turning of a calendar for many is all about resolutions. For *Lake Tahoe News* we would like to not be able to write the first sentence of this editorial a year from now. We'll do our part to make that possible, if you will do yours.

Is it that hard to do unto others as you would want done to you? Is it that hard to voice your opinion about a topic without being critical of someone else? Why can't you just write: I disagree with *Lake Tahoe News* because … and then leave it at that.

Happy New Year from everyone at *Lake Tahoe News*!

Letter: South Tahoe snow removal is atrocious

To the community,

The snow removal in the city is unbelievable. I was in the area Sunday and was ashamed of the snow removal that has been done, or should I say not done.

The roads are narrow and the pack on the streets is unacceptable. There were no plows out and the roads should have been blown by now to there fullest width.

I went by the city yard and the rotaries didn’t even have chains on them. I am amazed that there have been no comments in the paper yet.

When driving around the county areas I found that all of there blowers were out and all of there graders were out and the streets out there looked real good. It used to be that when it snowed the crews went to work and worked 24 hours a day until all streets were at full width and we were ready for the next storm. If the city were to get another storm right now of any size, the city would not be ready and there will be hell to pay from the citizens.

I don’t know who is calling the shots in the Public Works Department, but they had better get there head out of there pocket and wake up. Is there no one there that knows how to peel the pack off of the streets? The city has the finest equipment with the cat graders and the front plows that should

be being used to push back the streets to full width and remove all the pack.

The most important function in the city is snow removal. Without it the police and fire departments can not do there duty and the citizens and above all the tourist that bring the money will have a very bad taste of the city services.

I served 28 years in the Public Works Division and 21 of those as street superintendent and never in our worst years did I ever see the area in the city this bad.

What are they going to do if they get a real storm soon?

Thomas Fay, Arizona

Opinion: Advocating for ignition interlocks for convicted drunken drivers

By Nancy White

WASHINGTON -– As Americans prepare for holiday celebrations, AAA reminds drivers and passengers alike of the dangers on the roads this New Year’s Day, which consistently ranks as the year’s deadliest day for alcohol-related fatalities.

To strengthen efforts to protect the public against drunken drivers and reduce alcohol-related traffic deaths, AAA is announcing its support of ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders, and offers important safety advice to partygoers.

“AAA is not alone in its concern about impaired driving or strong support for tough policies for convicted drunk drivers,” said AAA Traffic Safety Advocacy Director Jake Nelson.

According to the 2012 Traffic Safety Culture Index conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, more than nine in 10 drivers consider it a serious threat to their personal safety when others drink and drive, and nearly all (97 percent) surveyed find it unacceptable for a driver to get behind the wheel when they have had too much to drink. To prevent these dangers, nearly eight in 10 Americans support requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders, even if it’s their first conviction.

Research has identified ignition interlock devices as a proven way to save lives. AAA’s recommendation to require the use of IIDs for all convicted offenders is grounded in research.

“Evidence clearly shows that IIDs are more effective than other methods at reducing re-arrest among convicted drunk drivers and keeping them off the road,” said Nelson.

AAA is reaching out to motorists on the heels of a recent National Transportation Safety Board decision to support laws requiring IID use for all first-time DUI offenders – one of several new recommendations issued to help curb alcohol-related traffic injury and death.

“I commend AAA for stepping up for safety,” said NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman. “Technologies, such as ignition interlocks, will reduce alcohol-related crashes on our nation’s roadways. We look forward to working alongside AAA and its clubs to eliminate the nation’s top killer on our roadways – impaired driving.”

Preventing drinking and driving is a shared responsibility to save lives. While AAA advocates expanding IID use to all persons convicted of drunken driving, New Year’s Eve

partygoers can do their part by heeding the following advice:

Always plan ahead to designate a non-drinking driver before any party or celebration begins;

Never get behind the wheel of a car when you've been drinking alcohol – even after just one drink;

Never ride as a passenger in a car driven by someone who has been drinking alcohol – even after just one drink;

Do not hesitate to take the keys from friends or family members who may be impaired;

Call a taxi for a friend in need;

Be a responsible host in reminding guests to stay safe and always offer alcohol-free beverages;

If you encounter an impaired driver on the road, keep a safe distance and ask a passenger to call 911 (or pull over to a safe location to make the call yourself)

Remember: prescription, over-the-counter medications and illegal drugs also can impair your ability to drive safely.

Nancy White works for AAA.

Letter: Bread & Broth thanks real estate team

To the community,

The South Tahoe Board of Realtors generously donated money and their time to sponsor Bread & Broth's evening dinner on Dec. 3. Their donation covered the costs involved in providing a hot, well-balanced meal to over 80 guests at their Adopt A Day of Nourishment dinner.

Representing the South Tahoe Board of Realtors at the dinner were Joe Filipko, Jennifer Fortune and Mark Treiber. The sponsor's volunteer crew worked side by side with B&B volunteers to bag give-away food items, distribute the bags and serve the dinner and beverages to the attending dinner guests.

They were an awesome crew and all of the B&B volunteers enjoyed working with them.

Bread & Broth is very thankful to South Tahoe Board of Realtors for their support of the program's efforts to provide a weekly evening meal to the needy members of the South Lake Tahoe community. Due to donor and volunteer generosity, B&B has been providing sustenance and a central gathering place every Monday evening at St. Theresa Church's parish hall for over 23 years.

For more information on Bread & Broth donation or volunteering opportunities, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: An army makes Clean

Tahoe the success that it is

By Ellen Flynn

As this year comes to a close, I look back upon the service we have provided throughout the year to our community, the impact we have made, and I'm compelled to write to my community.

Clean Tahoe's dedicated staff, Jeff Pollitt and Lou Graves, drove the streets of the city and county of South Lake Tahoe picking up more than 150 tons of illegally dumped items, trash on roadsides, public lots and assisted our community in getting rid of unwanted items. The Dinner Table Project, launched in 2010, continues to help those in need in our community with recycled furniture. It's been a great year of being in service.

I'm happy to report that the program's fiscal situation stabilized last year. This hasn't been the case for much of the past five years. The program has struggled financially with the rising cost of doing business and a paycheck that hasn't changed much since 2002. All employee benefits were cut at the close of 2010 so that we could move into 2011 with a balanced budget.

We recognize that we do not fight the battle of litter alone. It takes an army. An army of people who also recognize that the war on trash can sometimes be an uphill battle. We are your front line troops, so to speak, and we are turning around today to thank the many who stand behind us in our daily crusade.

First, a debt of gratitude goes to the residents of South Lake Tahoe. Without your support, this program would not be successful. Quite simply, Clean Tahoe Program was born from your good stewardship of this area. You voted to spend $1.20 every three months to fund the program. Take a look at your

South Tahoe Refuse bill and at the bottom you'll notice the surcharge. For the price of two latte's (we also receive $3 from your property taxes) you have funded Clean Tahoe for the year. Now that's an incredible value.

A huge thank you goes to the fine folks at Heavenly/Vail Resorts Echo Charitable Giving foundation for sponsoring our Community Cleanup Day. Clean Tahoe's annual event continues to provide the once per year opportunity for residents to unload a truckload of unwanted items for only $5. For the past two years they have provided assistance in the form of a marketing guru, a large banner which advertises our event at the senior center, and enough funding to cover the loses which typically run more than $2,000. This generosity ensures that we can continue to offer this event to the community without raising the price. Thank you Heavenly.

To those who became members of the program and are supporting Clean Tahoe in a bigger and more direct way, thank you. Our membership base is growing thanks to your belief in what we do.

Several businesses also chose to invest in the program by becoming business members: The Hard Rock Café stepped in this year with generous sponsorship of $500 and a donation of more than 50 chairs from their restaurant to the Dinner Table Project. Tamarack Rentals joined and Realty World Lake Tahoe renewed as "Business Plus" sponsors with Huber Plumbing, Sugar Pine Foundation and Svadhyaya Yoga also joining at the "Business" level. All of our members are ensuring that Clean Tahoe continues to serve you at the highest level. (Check out www.clean-tahoe.org to see how you can join!).

Speaking of the Dinner Table Project, the vision of recycling some of the furniture we find and giving it back to those in need in our community is now going on its third year of operation. Since December 2010, the Dinner Table Project has given furniture to 110 families and has received more than 136

donations of furniture. You continue to support this endeavor by donating your used furniture and helping your neighbor. It has been heartwarming indeed to see your generosity. Thank you for your help.

Then there are the locals who hike, bike and walk the paths trails and roadways. You are a mighty force of dedicated individuals who take it upon yourselves to pick up trash whenever you see it. People who take matters into their own hands and just do it. You are legions. To you, we say thank you. Thank you for caring about your community and helping us keep it clean. You are the ones who understand that it is all of our responsibility to do so. You do it for a higher purpose.

Finally, I thank the newly retired Bob Albertazzi, former community service officer for the South Lake Tahoe Police Department and our City Council for making trash ordinance violations and containment a priority. This year saw the institution of a citation process that made people accountable for mismanagement of their trash. We are seeing more animal resistant cans in place and those problem properties with the chronic trash problems are becoming fewer and further between than in years previous.

I commend your service to our community Bob; your ability to get things done is unprecedented in my eight years at Clean Tahoe. I will miss working with you and I can speak for all of the staff at Clean Tahoe when I say that our city will miss you.

It truly takes an army … a community, and I’m grateful for all of you.

Happy New Year, South Lake Tahoe. May you all be blessed with an abundance of good things in your life. Rest well knowing that Clean Tahoe’s business is picking up.

Ellen Flynn is Clean Tahoe’s program manager.