Endorsement: A reluctant nod to Gaines in 6th Assembly District

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Oct. 10, 2012, Sacramento Bee.***

In the race for the 6th Assembly District – a heavily Republican district that includes parts of Sacramento, El Dorado and Placer counties – the options are less than palatable. But the choice is fairly easy.

Incumbent Beth Gaines is a better pick than challenger Andy Pugno.

Gaines – who succeeded her husband, Sen. Ted Gaines, in his old seat in 2011 – has worked the last year to make up for her lack of experience. She pushed legislation to limit disability lawsuits against small businesses, and championed small efforts to create jobs in her district, including approving commercial crawfish harvesting in Lake Tahoe.

While she is hardly as ambitious, thoughtful and pragmatic as, say, former Assemblyman Roger Niello – who previously represented part of this district – she would serve her constituents better than Pugno, another Republican.

We weren't always convinced of that. In the primary, Pugno impressed us with his grasp of the issue and his commitment not to use the Legislature as platform for pushing wedge causes. Yet Pugno is an ideologue – he wrote Proposition 8, the legally challenged initiative banning same-sex marriage – and toward the end of the primary his extreme rhetoric didn't match his prior promises.

Even worse, Pugno made a silly pledge not to run against

Gaines if she ended being the top vote getter in the primary. That was not bright. Why should voters support a candidate if he or she isn't going to offer them a competitive race in the runoff?

Doubly worse, Pugno then backed off his pledge and has continued running against Gaines, although without much energy or commitment. For that, he has been rightly dismissed as a flip-flopper and an opportunist.

Voters in the 6th Assembly District deserve better than this. They deserve two candidates willing to face the voters and each other, and answer the tough questions. While he stood almost no chance of winning in this district, Democrat Regy Bronner would have at least prompted Gaines to explain to voters why they should re-elect her.

As it is, Gaines is free to continue in her bubble world, benefiting from huge campaign money from contributors outside her district and rarely answering questions from the media without a handler at her elbow. Voters in the 6th District have little choice to re-elect her, but should demand better choices the next time.

Opinion: Free speech is fine until someone doesn't like it

By Jonathan Turley, Washington Post

Free speech is dying in the Western world. While most people still enjoy considerable freedom of expression, this right,

once a near-absolute, has become less defined and less dependable for those espousing controversial social, political or religious views. The decline of free speech has come not from any single blow but rather from thousands of paper cuts of well-intentioned exceptions designed to maintain social harmony.

In the face of the violence that frequently results from anti-religious expression, some world leaders seem to be losing their patience with free speech. After a video called "Innocence of Muslims" appeared on YouTube and sparked violent protests in several Muslim nations last month, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned that "when some people use this freedom of expression to provoke or humiliate some others' values and beliefs, then this cannot be protected."

It appears that the one thing modern society can no longer tolerate is intolerance. As Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard put it in her recent speech before the United Nations, "Our tolerance must never extend to tolerating religious hatred."

A willingness to confine free speech in the name of social pluralism can be seen at various levels of authority and government. In February, for instance, Pennsylvania Judge Mark Martin heard a case in which a Muslim man was charged with attacking an atheist marching in a Halloween parade as a "zombie Muhammed." Martin castigated not the defendant but the victim, Ernie Perce, lecturing him that "our forefathers intended to use the First Amendment so we can speak with our mind, not to piss off other people and cultures – which is what you did."

Of course, free speech is often precisely about pissing off other people – challenging social taboos or political values.

This was evident in recent days when courts in Washington and New York ruled that transit authorities could not prevent or

delay the posting of a controversial ad that says: “In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad.”

When U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer said the government could not bar the ad simply because it could upset some Metro riders, the ruling prompted calls for new limits on such speech. And in New York, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority responded by unanimously passing a new regulation banning any message that it considers likely to “incite” others or cause some “other immediate breach of the peace.”

Such efforts focus not on the right to speak but on the possible reaction to speech – a fundamental change in the treatment of free speech in the West. The much-misconstrued statement of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes that free speech does not give you the right to shout fire in a crowded theater is now being used to curtail speech that might provoke a violence-prone minority. Our entire society is being treated as a crowded theater, and talking about whole subjects is now akin to shouting “fire!”

Read the whole story

Opinion: GOP platform contains world’s strictest abortion policy

By Joel Brinkley

Costa Rican women are appealing to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to overturn a national law banning in-vitro

fertilization.

The state's national ombudsman, Ofelia Taitelbaum, started the process, saying "people will understand that this is about rights" that are appropriate for "our times."

In the worldwide debate over abortion and women's rights, this might seem like an unusual law. After all, in-vitro fertilization actually creates life. But Costa Rica is heavily Catholic; more than 76 percent of its people identify themselves as Roman Catholic, and the Vatican openly opposes in-vitro fertilization, widely known as IVF.

When British scientist Robert Edwards won the 2010 Nobel Prize for his development of in-vitro fertilization therapy, Monsignor Ignacio Carrasco, the Vatican's spokesman for bioethics, declared that because of IVF, "a large number of freezers" in the world are "filled with embryos. In the best of cases they are transferred into a uterus, but most probably will end up abandoned or dead."

The odd thing is that Costa Rica is one of Latin America's most progressive nations, a true, longtime democracy that has one of the region's more liberal abortion policies. The state allows abortion in cases that are important to the woman's physical or mental health.

Last year, the United Nations published a study of abortion and related policies worldwide and found that the most restrictive laws are in Latin America. But in truth, the study's findings show that the United States would be home to the world's most restrictive abortion policy – if the Republican Party has its way.

The party's platform calls for a constitutional amendment that would forbid abortion under all circumstances. The U.N. study shows that only four of the world's 230 states have similarly restrictive policies – El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile and the Dominican Republic. All of them are predominantly Roman

Catholic.

The Vatican firmly opposes contraception and abortion. About 95 percent of Dominicans are Catholic, for example, while fewer than one-quarter of Americans identify themselves as members of that faith.

But the Republican position takes the prohibition even further. Mitt Romney and many other Republicans are promising to eliminate funding for Planned Parenthood, the organization that provides health care services for poor women nationwide — including abortion referrals in most of its offices.

Well, even those four Latin American nations that forbid abortion under any circumstances all provide government-funded family-planning services, the United Nations reported. So do Iran, Bangladesh, North Korea and East Timor, the Southeast Asian country that is the world's most heavily Catholic state. Only 2 percent of Timorese identify with another faith.

In August, a federal appeals court ruled that Texas can end financing for Planned Parenthood clinics. The state's Republican-controlled Legislature had passed a law last year forbidding state funding for any organization affiliated with abortion providers.

All of this seems to be another big problem for Romney, who has been self-immolating over the last few weeks. A recent Gallup poll showed a continuing gender gap in President Obama's favor. Female voters preferred Obama by eight percentage points, and the Democrats are seizing on that, running ads about the Republicans' "war on women."

The truth is that if the Republicans were to get their way, many American women wanting or needing an abortion would certainly turn to back-alley abortionists, which would be an extremely dangerous turn for American society.

"Unsafe abortions continue to be widespread, and nearly all

are performed in developing countries" where abortion is restricted, the United Nations said. The World Health Organization reported that in 2003, back-alley practitioners performed 19.7 million abortions worldwide. That number rose to 21.6 million in 2008, the last year for which statistics are available.

The United Nations added, "globally, it's estimated that 47,000 women lose their lives each year from the complications from unsafe abortions, almost all of which could have been prevented through better access to sexuality education."

No other nation in the Western world restricts abortion as severely as the Republican Party platform advocates. In fact, the U.N. study shows that since 1996, far more nations have been liberalizing their abortion policies than restricting them – by a factor of more than 4 to 1.

However, it also adds that some states impose policy conditions that might not be reflected in actual law, among them a compulsory waiting period, parental or spousal consent or mandatory counseling. It did not report that any other countries order invasive ultrasound examinations before an abortion is permitted, another favored Republican proposal.

Will the Republicans get their way? Not likely. Most Americans, women particularly, adamantly oppose that.

Joel Brinkley, a professor of journalism at Stanford University, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former foreign correspondent for the New York Times.

Opinion: Ask questions before forcing change on people

By Kathryn Reed

The problem with the sentiment – If you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem – is that you might not agree with the solutions being presented. That, in my opinion, does not make you part of the problem.

That is one of the problems with some of the people in the Lake Tahoe Basin. They have a vision – be it for the South Shore, Tahoe City, Incline Village, Homewood, Kings Beach, you name it – and they expect everyone to jump on board. And when you don't jump on board, you are accused of being part of the problem and/or of wanting the status quo.

Wanting the status quo is a valid opinion. It might be working for someone even if it is not working for you.

Not being engaged is being part of the problem. And whining anonymously on *Lake Tahoe News* is barely being engaged – in my opinion.

People need to explain why they want or don't want something to happen. It's not that more studies need to be done. But people really need to start proving their ideas are valid. Showing pretty pictures is not enough. Saying someone wanted it in the 1980s is not a reason to do it 30 years later. And then they need to listen to those who disagree. And the dissenters in turn need to make a case for their ideas or a case for why the status quo is OK.

When it comes to the loop road on the South Shore someone asked me to name another town where a state highway goes through it where that city is doing well.

Solvang. That’s my answer. I visited this Central Coast city last month for the first time.

A disclaimer – it’s not an apples to apples comparison; I don’t know if any city is enough like another to have that apples to apples analysis.

But here goes – Solvang is a tourist town with a state highway through it. But the speed limit is much lower than South Lake Tahoe’s. That is where I think South Lake Tahoe needs to make a change. It needs to work on its legislators to lower the speed limit – to get Caltrans to change the policy of how it determines the speed limit. (And this suggestion is coming from someone with a bit of a lead foot.)

In Solvang, the sidewalks are wide. Has anyone noticed how narrow the sidewalks are in South Lake Tahoe that Caltrans has put in? Our sidewalks need to be wider – like Ski Run Boulevard, Linear Park, Heavenly Village.

I didn’t see any paid parking in Solvang. Cars were parked on the main street and some of the businesses had parking in front of their places.

I noticed fewer ingresses and egresses – so as a pedestrian I didn’t feel like I was about to get hit. Could property owners in the basin work together to share driveways?

A big difference between all the towns in the basin and Solvang is how they are laid out. The basin towns are linear. Solvang is on more of a grid, with several streets easy to walk up and down. The vision some have for Tahoe City is for businesses to go off the main drag of Highway 28. This would create a more pedestrian-friendly town like Solvang. If the types of businesses changed near Stateline, that’s what South Lake Tahoe could have, too.

Solvang didn’t have a single bike rack that I saw. I’m pretty sure we locked our bikes illegally.

However, I was not scared to ride my bike on that state highway. I can't say the same for any of the highways in the basin. I'm scared to be on two wheels on Tahoe's highways.

I didn't see any empty buildings in Solvang. This gave the appearance of a thriving economy. The opposite is going on in Tahoe.

How the built environment looks in parts of Lake Tahoe is atrocious. That is what needs to change.

But we also need to change the mindset of how much money we are going to make. The ledgers from the 1980s are history and are not likely to be repeated. It's time to adjust to that.

It is also time to accept that nearly every place else in the world has tourism as part of its economy. That means the traveler perceives there are more places to visit. That would likely mean fewer repeat visitors to Lake Tahoe.

When I was in England this summer a taxi driver said he likes to ski at Heavenly. But then he said something like, "But there really isn't anything to do in Tahoe in the winter if you don't ski." I paused. Then I agreed with him.

He nailed it. Not only is the Lake Tahoe Basin dependent on tourists, but also we only attract one kind in the winter – the kind who plays in the snow. And last winter we had no snow so we had no visitors.

To me, to stop the downward spiral, these are questions that need to be asked and answered of those who live, work and play in Tahoe, as well as those who own property and businesses:

• What improvements do you want to make to your property and/or business and why aren't you?

• Are you satisfied with how your property looks?

• Are you willing to join a business district like Ski Run

Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe created in order to establish a pot of cash for improvements to your area?

• Would you be willing to donate X number of hours a month/year to help another property owner (residential or commercial) to make improvements to their property so the cost of labor is eliminated or greatly decreased?

• What are you doing to market your business to locals and/or people outside the area? Do you know what the return on investment is? Would it be better to pool your resources – say all the restaurants in an area – to showcase the variety that is available?

• What are you doing to make Lake Tahoe a better place to live, work and play?

• What activities/events need to occur throughout the year to get locals engaged and tourists in beds?

(Note: I'm on the fence about the loop road. No one has proven to me that it is going to be better for the entire South Shore. If we eliminated all traffic through that area, I might be able to have a definitive opinion.)

Letter: Wollan is good for Placer County Water Agency

To the community,

Returning Otis Wollan to the Placer County Water Agency District 5 director's seat is a good idea for a number of

reasons, not the least being his “at-home” knowledge of District Five that comes from years of working with a large network of Tahoe, Truckee, American and Bear

River expertise and experience, that he helped create.

He has 20 years of previous experience on the PCWA Board of Directors. That’s given him a whole-district focus that is particularly important for residents in the Lake Tahoe area, where he has an established track record of making sure that local concerns aren’t orphaned because of their distance from Auburn.

During his previous time on the PCWA Board, for instance, he brought $1.5 million to the Lake Tahoe area for local water projects, an investment he called a “down payment for the future.”

Otis Wollan envisions a District 5 future with secure water supplies, in an environment made safer from the threat of wildfire. I’ll definitely vote for that.

Will Stockwin, Colfax

Opinion: A no vote on Prop. 30 would be ‘horrific’

By Vicki Barber

Driving around our expansive El Dorado County – sprawling from the valley up through the foothills and forests to Lake Tahoe – I am constantly amazed at the diversity and beauty of the terrain.

I am equally impressed by the diversity of our school districts.



Vicki Barber

Yet after a quarter century of striving to improve the quality of education in both large and small, urban and deeply rural districts, I am feeling a growing concern – and personal sadness – about our local schools and the future of education in our communities.

My primary concern is not just about the pivotal Proposition 30 facing state voters in the Nov. 6 election but from a cumulative erosion of funding for schools in the past five years.

In El Dorado County our 12 local elementary districts, two unified districts and union high school district have been forced to cut about 20 percent from their annual budgets – about $22 million in real-world dollars. Numerous programs have had to be curtailed or canceled, with talented teachers and staff being laid off.

Amazingly, our schools have been able to sustain a solid performance level of 81 percent, despite cutback upon cutback. I credit the professionalism and dedication of our teaching, administrative and support staffs, as well as involved parents in our schools.

However, in my conversations with our professionals, I sense that the extra sacrifices most have made to sustain quality have taken a personal toll. The cuts are creating a level of

discouragement and fatigue that begins to approach burnout for some.

There are two types of cuts: direct reductions in funding due to the multi-billion-dollar statewide budget deficit, and "deferred" payments – which amount to the same thing (cutting people and programs) locally.

Then comes this year's blow (if voters reject Prop. 30): By the end of the school year, our districts must make another drastic cut of about 10 percent, or about $455 per student on a basis of $5,000 per student from the state. This would amount to several million more dollars.

While I am not advocating on behalf of Proposition 30, I feel it is my responsibility to warn of the immediate and longer-term impacts of its failure – impacts that will directly impact our 30,000 students, 6,500 professionals and support staff, and the overall quality of the education we provide our children.

Based on my lifetime of experience in education, including a quarter century with the El Dorado County Office of Education in budgeting, special services and as superintendent, last month I said publicly that the impacts would be "horrific." I stand by that professional assessment.

It is demoralizing to those of us who have spent our careers trying to provide quality education for children, and now we're dismantling programs that make a real difference.

I am not alone in my concern and sadness at witnessing the erosion of the quality educational programs I have spent a career helping build. It is what I hear from officials in our local districts, from colleagues statewide, from teaching and support staff throughout our schools, and even from within the County Office of Education itself.

Deputy Superintendent Jeremy Meyers, in charge of educational

services and programs, believes that we are quite literally at a “tipping point” where quality cannot be sustained despite the dedication and best efforts of our staff. He notes that the cutbacks are not only increasing class sizes and reducing programs but are actually ending the careers of some teachers.

He’s right. We are seeing the brightest, our youngest folks who are coming into the profession at a time when we’re then saying to them, “We can’t continue,” as we hand them layoff notices under the last-in-first-out seniority rule.

The loss of another 10 percent in per student funding, on top of the deep cuts already made, could mean shortening the school year by three full weeks.

And despite the rhetoric of politicians on the importance of education to America, do we really believe – in comparison to other countries and the world economy – that we want our kids in the United States to receive three weeks less of school?

Vicki Barber is superintendent of schools for El Dorado County.

Letter: TRPA expresses its appreciation

To the community,

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency would like to everyone who made TRPA’s Community Appreciation Day Open House and Lake Spirit Awards Ceremony such a great success last month including: Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe

Science Consortium, Tahoe Environmental Research Center, Tahoe Resource Conservation District, Tahoe Catering Company, the Red Hut, our wonderful band, Suspect Terrane, the staff and Governing Board of TRPA, and all the community members that took the time to attend.

We also want to congratulate our Lake Spirit Award winners this year: Heather Segale (Tahoe Environmental Research Center), Jacquie Chandler (Sustainable Tahoe and the Tahoe Expo), John Dayberry (World Canoe Project and PaddleFest), and the family of Alan Tolhurst who received a posthumous award for his lifetime of service.

Finally, we would like to thank all the unsung heroes of our community for their efforts, large and small, at protecting the beauty and clarity of Lake Tahoe.

We couldn't do it without you.

Kristi Boosman, TRPA spokeswoman

Endorsement: LTN says Sass, Conner are best choice for South Lake Tahoe City Council



Publisher's note: ***The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of six community members gathered to hash out who the two best people in the field of five are to lead South Lake Tahoe on the City Council for the next four years.***

We believe Austin Sass and JoAnn Conner will best represent South Lake Tahoe on the City Council for the next four years. We believe they are stronger as a team – though they aren't running as that – than individuals. This is because of what each brings to the table.

Sass has the corporate-world experience this town needs. We need someone who can speak the language of big business. Like it or not, there are a ton of corporate entities in town and more are coming – from grocery stores, to department stores, to ski resorts, to hoteliers.

Sass has experience with big budgets. Multimillion-dollar budgets. A budget like the city of South Lake Tahoe has.

The incumbents believe borrowing from reserves and satisfying the state requirement of passing a balanced budget each year means the city has a balanced budget. City Manager Nancy Kerry last month told *Lake Tahoe News* the city is likely to face more than a $1 million deficit in the next fiscal year – 2013-14. Neither of the incumbents is addressing this reality.

Sass comes from a tourism-marketing background where he worked for Vail Resorts and Aramark. We have a tourism-based economy. We need someone on the council with that background.

On the other side of the spectrum, Conner has a perspective no one else brings. She has lived the non-privileged life of Lake Tahoe. She talks about the whole community. She talks about the people no one else is talking about – the people living check-to-check, small business owners, their employees – the people who truly make this a community.

When *Lake Tahoe News* put out a call to the power structure to show up at Bread & Broth to mix with those who may only get one hot meal a week, she was there that night. She was sitting beside, talking to and breaking bread with a segment of the population the other four candidates don't acknowledge. And, yet, with 60 percent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District's

students receiving free or reduced lunches, clearly poverty with a view is a reality for so many.

Conner is the only candidate on the campaign trail advocating for more jobs in this town. She wants this area to have more than a tourist economy and recognizes that a simple thing like broadband would help inspire companies or those working remotely to move to South Lake Tahoe.

She also runs a small events company, so she gets that people want to do more than look at a lake or walk in the woods.



JoAnn Conner



Austin Sass

It may be disconcerting to some that Sass has received money from out of town interests or larger entities. But $5,000 of his donations came from the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association. This group *only* represents hotels in South Lake Tahoe. It costs money to get your name in front of voters. He already had to replace signs – and he's not the only one – because people vandalized them. While $5,000 is a lot of money in some ways, we don't believe it's enough to sway any candidate. After all, it's not like it went into his private

bank account.

Combined, Conner and Sass will bring the big and small perspectives to the table that this town and basin need. We need an eclectic mix on the council to move this city forward. We like that both want to promote recreation and both are active.

We can’t re-elect someone who when asked at the Oct. 10 Soroptimist candidate forum what vote he would change he said pot dispensaries instead of anything about the hole in the ground. It is partially Cole’s Hole. After all, Hal Cole is the one who has said there is no such thing as a performance bond.

And we can’t re-elect the other incumbent – a man who seems so incredibly out of touch with the residents of South Lake Tahoe. The depth of Bruce Grego is questionable. Nothing substantive comes out of his mouth.

Clinton Schue doesn’t seem to take running for office seriously, so how can anyone believe he would take the office itself seriously?

While we know Sass and Conner can come across as arrogant, even abrasive, we also know it takes people who are self-confident, a bit opinionated, and definitely self-starters to be successful councilmembers. We also believe the Sass-Conner combo will work well with the remaining councilmembers.

On Nov. 6 (or earlier via by mail) mark your ballots for Austin Sass and JoAnn Conner for South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Letter: Democrats are the ones creating gridlock, not McClintock

To the community,

Urs Schuler of Placerville [Voices, Oct. 10], makes one of the most peculiar arguments I've seen. He describes the trillion-dollar deficits and excessive spending during this administration, but then suggests that we replace Tom McClintock, one of the leading voices in Congress for fiscal sanity, with Jack Uppal who promises to support even more spending.

Schuler accuses McClintock of "creating gridlock". Really?

McClintock was one of the budget leaders with Paul Ryan in the House who produced two consecutive plans to balance the budget and retire the debt. The gridlock is from Democrats in the Senate who killed both plans while refusing to pass a budget of there own in more than three years.

Schuler's letter is a prime example of empty rhetoric and blind partisanship that we're seeing from Democratic partisans this year.

Given their record, I guess I can't blame them.

John Stelzmiller, Twin Bridges and Placerville

Opinion: Media needs to storm the places pols tell the truth

By Peter Beinart, Newsweek

Of the many things that the now-legendary Mitt Romney Boca Raton video has revealed, perhaps the most important is this: the real presidential campaign is the one the public doesn't see. Sure, Romney and President Obama fly around the country giving speeches and doing media interviews.

And sure, they occasionally use those speeches or interviews to unveil some policy nugget that helps Americans understand what they might do in office. But for the most part, their public performances are just that: performances. They speak in calculated, glittering generalities. The throngs who crowd into their rallies never get the chance to probe deeper, and when interviewers do, the candidates artfully deflect their toughest questions, knowing full well that any interviewer who inquires too relentlessly is unlikely to get many future interviews.

The more honest discussions take place behind closed doors, in the innumerable private fundraisers that Romney and Obama do with their big givers. Honesty, in fact, is part of what those donors are paying for. No one shells out $50,000 to listen to the same platitudes that Joe and Mary Six-Pack hear at a 5,000-person rally in Akron, Ohio. In the "skybox" society (in Michael Sandel's parlance) in which we live, the super-rich don't simply stand in different lines at the airport; they experience a different presidential campaign.

It's not that the remarks candidates offer to donors bear no resemblance to their publicly stated views. They just express those views in a franker, less scripted, less sanitized way.

Publicly Romney derides big government. Privately he told Florida donors this spring that he might slash the Department of Education and eliminate Housing and Urban Development—specifics he had not shared with ordinary Americans. Publicly Romney accuses Obama of wanting to make Americans dependent on government. Privately he tells donors that half the country is composed of whiners who want to be dependent on government. Publicly Romney praises Israel and criticizes the Palestinians. Privately he says he opposes his own party platform's stated commitment to a Palestinian state.

Similarly, Barack Obama publicly talks about the economic frustrations of working-class Americans. But in the heat of the 2008 campaign, then-candidate Obama was caught by a Huffington Post "citizen journalist" telling a group of San Francisco donors that small-town Pennsylvanians "get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them." In private, in other words, Romney and Obama offer a version of what they say in public, just minus the dishonest, poll-tested fluff.

Currently the candidates' staffs sharply restrict the media's access to events with big donors. The Romney campaign does not allow press into fundraisers held in private homes. Obama bars journalists from the question-and-answer sessions that usually follow his remarks to donors. And the press plays along. That needs to change. What *Mother Jones*, Jimmy Carter's grandson, and his anonymous videotaping source have shown is that a creative, audacious press corps could do far more to inform the mass of Americans about the things big donors hear behind closed doors. Journalists could seek out donors, waiters, or anyone else with access to those closed-to-the-press events and either interview them about what they heard or, better yet, ask them to tape it.

Media organizations could tell the campaigns that if they don't allow reporters to cover the freewheeling candidate Q&A sessions that take place behind closed doors at night, those

reporters won’t cover the rote stump speeches the candidates give in the afternoon.

In short, the press should do everything it possibly can, within the bounds of law and ethics, to foil the campaigns’ efforts to speak one way to the 1 percent — and another way to everyone else.

Thanks to the Supreme Court, the government is less able to regulate, or even track, the way money enters political campaigns. But the media can still influence what that money buys. By exposing the private conversations between donors and aspiring presidents, the media cannot only fulfill its duty to help average Americans make an informed choice. It can also undermine the very rationale for super-rich donors to give in the first place.

After all, if everyone in the country is going to learn what candidates say at fundraisers, funders will have less incentive to shell out $50,000 to attend. And then, perhaps, people like Romney and Obama will spend less time speaking honestly about the American people and more time speaking honestly to them.