Opinion: Lake clarity needs to be reported in real time

To the community,

On Sept. 30, Tahoe Pipe Club completed its final summer 2012 Lake Tahoe clarity measurement. During summer 2012 (June through September) the average clarity of Lake Tahoe was equal to 59.7 feet and represented an 8 foot improvement in summer clarity compared to the 2011 average as reported by the Tahoe Environmental Research Center.

Tahoe Pipe Club would like real time publication of all official clarity measurements. Real time publication will improve the public's understanding of the fluctuations in lake clarity and help to improve our understanding of the processes which impact clarity.

Processes such as snowfall, snow melt, boating, rain, lake mixing and drought.

The current delay in releasing the official record and withholding monthly results deprives the public of gaining an understanding of how these processes can be better managed to improve clarity.

To learn more about Lake Tahoe and how we need to improve the management practices which are intended to save its clarity, go online.

Tahoe Pipe Club

Opinion: The fallacy of redistribution

By Thomas Sowell

The recently discovered tape on which Barack Obama said back in 1998 that he believes in redistribution is not really news. He said the same thing to Joe the Plumber four years ago. But the surfacing of this tape may serve a useful purpose if it gets people to thinking about what the consequences of redistribution are.

Those who talk glibly about redistribution often act as if people are just inert objects that can be placed here and there, like pieces on a chess board, to carry out some grand design. But if human beings have their own responses to government policies, then we cannot blithely assume that government policies will have the effect intended.



Thomas Sowell

The history of the 20th century is full of examples of countries that set out to redistribute wealth and ended up redistributing poverty.

The communist nations were a classic example, but by no means the only example. In theory, confiscating the wealth of the more successful people ought to make the rest of the society more prosperous. But when the Soviet Union confiscated the wealth of successful farmers, food became scarce. As many

people died of starvation under Stalin in the 1930s as died in Hitler's Holocaust in the 1940s.

How can that be? It is not complicated. You can only confiscate the wealth that exists at a given moment. You cannot confiscate future wealth – and that future wealth is less likely to be produced when people see that it is going to be confiscated. Farmers in the Soviet Union cut back on how much time and effort they invested in growing their crops, when they realized that the government was going to take a big part of the harvest. They slaughtered and ate young farm animals that they would normally keep tending and feeding while raising them to maturity.

People in industry are not inert objects either. Moreover, unlike farmers, industrialists are not tied to the land in a particular country. Russian aviation pioneer Igor Sikorsky could take his expertise to America and produce his planes and helicopters thousands of miles away from his native land. Financiers are even less tied down, especially today, when vast sums of money can be dispatched electronically to any part of the world.

If confiscatory policies can produce counterproductive repercussions in a dictatorship, they are even harder to carry out in a democracy. A dictatorship can suddenly swoop down and grab whatever it wants. But a democracy must first have public discussions and debates. Those who are targeted for confiscation can see the handwriting on the wall, and act accordingly.

Among the most valuable assets in any nation are the knowledge, skills and productive experience that economists call "human capital." When successful people with much human capital leave the country, either voluntarily or because of hostile governments or hostile mobs whipped up by demagogues exploiting envy, lasting damage can be done to the economy they leave behind.

Fidel Castro’s confiscatory policies drove successful Cubans to flee to Florida, often leaving much of their physical wealth behind. But poverty-stricken refugees rose to prosperity again in Florida, while the wealth they left behind in Cuba did not prevent the people there from being poverty stricken under Castro. The lasting wealth the refugees took with them was their human capital.

We have all heard the old saying that giving a man a fish feeds him only for a day, while teaching him to fish feeds him for a lifetime. Redistributionists give him a fish and leave him dependent on the government for more fish in the future. If the redistributionists were serious, what they would want to distribute is the ability to fish, or to be productive in other ways. Knowledge is one of the few things that can be distributed to people without reducing the amount held by others.

That would better serve the interests of the poor, but it would not serve the interests of politicians who want to exercise power, and to get the votes of people who are dependent on them. Barack Obama can endlessly proclaim his slogan of “Forward,” but what he is proposing is going backwards to policies that have failed repeatedly in countries around the world.

Yet, to many people who cannot be bothered to stop and think, redistribution sounds good.

Thomas Sowell a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute and author of “The Housing Boom and Bust”.

Opinion: Without monitoring online reviews, a business can suffer

By John S. Rizzo and V. Michael Santoro

It happens all the time: The hard-working crew at a small business loses customers thanks to the sour grapes of one person.

It could be a disgruntled employee, an angry customer or even a competitor.

Anyone can post a bad review online and hurt your business. Unfortunately, most business owners are not even aware that these bad reviews are out there.

Seventy-two percent of buyers trust reviews as much as personal recommendations, and 70 percent trust consumer opinions posted online, according to a recent Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey.

A bad review published in a newspaper, or broadcast on radio or TV, is short-lived, but a bad review posted online can live indefinitely. With consumers now researching an average of 10 reviews before making a buying decision, and 70 percent trusting a business that has a minimum of six reviews posted, business owners need to be proactive in developing their online reputation. You need several positive reviews.

Online searches have been streamlined, combining reviews with maps, pay-per-click advertising, local business directories and Facebook fan pages. As damaging as bad reviews can be, positive reviews can be equally constructive.

Here are some tips for reputation marketing:

• Develop a 5-Star Reputation: Begin by having your happy customers post great reviews about your business. Strive to have at least 10. Have each post to one of the following: Google Plus Local, Yelp, CitySearch, SuperPages, YP.com, your Facebook fan page, etc. This needs to be a continuous process. Proactively ask your customers to post reviews.

• Market Your Reputation: Once reviews are posted, use a well-designed online marketing strategy to drive targeted traffic to your website. Ensure that your website can convert this traffic into customers. Additionally, showcase these third-party reviews on your website.

• Manage Your Reputation: Regularly check that the reviews being posted are positive. You can use Google Alerts for your business name; however, you will need to check the local directories, too, since they're not picked up by Google Alerts. By building up the positive reviews, you can counter a poor one by sheer volume. You should also quickly post a reply to a negative review if they occur. Always be professional and indicate what action you have taken to remedy the situation.

• Create a Reputation Marketing Culture: Train your staff to proactively ask customers for reviews and to deal immediately with any customer who appears unhappy. A positive culture will encourage customers to post positive reviews about your business.

John S. Rizzo obtained his bachelor's in business administration and spent three years as a consultant for Amazon.com's publishing group. V. Michael Santoro has more than 10 years in the digital marketing field. His prior experience includes international senior marketing positions in technology fields.

Opinion: Caltrans survey doesn’t include loop road and TTD not including Caltrans

To the community,

At 5pm on Sept. 19, the phone rang. I picked up. A pleasant female voice said she was conducting a survey for Caltrans in El Dorado County. I was skeptical. I said I don’t do surveys on the phone. I asked how did she get my phone number and street address. She said she didn’t know. I said goodbye.

After I hung up, I phoned the city manager and asked her if she knew Caltrans was conducting a phone survey in El Dorado County. She said, no. I said it seems strange. She seemed to agree.



Bill Crawford

On Sept. 20, I phoned the public information office for Caltrans. A female answered. I asked if Caltrans was conducting a survey in El Dorado County. She said, yes. I asked, what’s the purpose. She said, Caltrans was trying to get to know people’s driving habits, which would help Caltans in its future planning.

I asked, does this involve the loop road. She said, no. I said, if the loop road is built, wouldn’t that involved Caltrans planning. She said, Caltrans would have to approve

the road. I said , you have been very helpful and hung up.

So, when will the Tahoe Transportation District seek Caltrans' approval of the loop road? How much time, money, and energy will be spent before the powers that be (the city, etc.) call it quits? The TTD is another layer of nonsense that's working for the private interest rather than the public interest. The TTD produces nothing but hot air. And it's time that Councilmember Angela Swanson stops bending over backward for the TTD's interest. It's clear for whom she serves.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Darvas speaks out about harrowing fire experience

To the community,

It is beyond any words of appreciation and thanks that I can express for the concern, sympathy, prayers and all the offers of help I have received since the incident on Sept. 18.

On the afternoon of Sept. 18, a freak accident resulted in the complete loss of my home of 40 years at Pioneer Trail and April Drive in South Lake Tahoe. The entire structure and all of the contents, including hundreds of my paintings, original oils, watercolors, serigraphs, all my tools, paints, computers, printers, framing equipment, documents, photos and 40 years of things are gone.

The fire started in my downstairs studio/gallery from an antique wood stove which I have used without incident for 35 years to quell the morning chill while working in the studio. On the 18th, I was in the adjacent room, actually the garage, cutting some boards for a crate to be shipped with a large painting. The miter saw was still on, so my first alarm was the smell of smoke.

Some packing material was on fire with flames about 2-feet tall and heavy smoke. With a gallon jug of water I attempted to douse the flames, but the intensity of the heat kept me from getting near enough. Also solvents, paint, a chain saw with gas in it were under the worktable.

So, choosing another option, I ran around the outside of the house, turned the hose on full blast and opened the studio door. Time lapse 30, 45 seconds. Then the blast tossed me back. I did pull the door shut and called 911. My van and a pickup truck were parked in front of the house as usual. By the time I parked both in my neighbor's driveway the first fire engine arrived. Amazing response! Within minutes there were a dozen or more emergency vehicles; South Lake Tahoe police, fire units, CHP, ambulance, command units, perhaps more. There is a fire hydrant on both corners of the property on Pioneer Trail.

Flames shot through the studio roof skylight, but several hoses were already in action. Me, in just a bit of a daze … well, I was stomping out cinder fires in the pine needles in my neighbor's driveway and yard when a fireman and, I assume, a paramedic sat me down and politely but firmly said my next stop was Barton Hospital ER.

"But please may I get some things out of the van and lock it .." – uttering some words like that as I was escorted to the ambulance gurney. "Nope, all that stuff in the van is safe, you sir, are going to the hospital now".

So, the last glance I had of what was 3120 Pioneer was out the back window with flames hitting the tree canopy as the siren came on. The ride, IV, oxygen mask, arrival at Barton was kind of a blur, but nurses, doctors, EKG, X-ray followed immediately.

Friends visited shortly after arriving in the ER, within minutes. Lauren, Kris, Bob, thank you … others as well that I may not recall. Then two days in ICU and an other in the Nursing Care Center. Face burns, smoke and some crud in the lungs and eyes that got a little toasted. That was the scariest and the most painful.

Up until Dr. William Downey came to the ICU, hauling his microscope, examined my eyes, ordered some medication and assured me that no permanent damage occurred, I had some crazy thoughts of starting up classical guitar or dictating travel stories from some 50 sailing and canal trips abroad. However, my 1960 Martin was in the pile of ashes, and truthfully, I had way too good a time on those sailing trips to remember much of it.

With Dr. Downey's words and all those wonderful nurses applying medication to my eyes three times a day, I was much relieved that I could still be a painter. No paints, no brushes, canvas or studio but yes, eyes! By the way, those nurses were, I am sure, beautiful in addition to being so attentive and caring, I just could not see them. My heart, respiration, facial burns and the eye injury were under constant care and vigilance by the doctors, Dr. Telisac and Dr. Tang, also Dr. Orr in the ER, all the nurses and hospital staff. I cannot imagine receiving better care anywhere. I am not saying I want to go back – except of course, for a thank you visit.

Now for all you wonderful friends who came to visit me at the ICU, those of you who came and the nurses kept you out, all the flowers, (I saw them through the window … no flowers in

the room rule) … the snacks, clothes, toiletries, thank you dearly.

I could not answer all the phone calls since I had practically no voice for two days. The nurses patiently took all the messages, day and night, brought them to me on post-it notes, which sadly I only saw as fuzzy yellow squares. All are saved stuck in my notebook along with the flower cards, notes and emails friends kept and forwarded. Saturday evening I had recovered enough to go home … OK, to a home.

Sunday was recovery day from the recovery. Today, Monday, was a brief time at the Ski Run Marina Gallery, a new cell phone with same old number and starting on the long list of returning phone calls and answering notes and emails on a more personal basis. Please bear with me, my voice is only good for a few conversations before the irritation starts up, but is better every day. I can see to write this, yet reluctant to drive.

I truly feel blessed with so many friends and even some strangers offering me housing, and help of all sorts. I have a cabin to stay in for a while from a very dear and longtime friend. It happens to be filled with a bunch of my paintings. So in a way, I am home. I do and will need help. My spirit, faith and confidence are intact knowing you are there.

So, there is the story. Admittedly, some omissions, lapses in memory, and a desire not to bore you with a long and tedious narrative … to late, huh? I know there are several versions floating out there in cyberspace already, like arson … a meth lab explosion … who knows what else. Anyway, this time you heard it from the “hoarse’s” mouth.

God bless you all … true friends really are your family. I am fortunate to have you.

Peter Darvas

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Notes:

• For anyone interested in contributing to Peter's recovery fund, El Dorado Savings Bank has set up a "Peter Darvas Assistance/Peter Darvas Donations" account. A contribution may be made at any branch of El Dorado Savings Bank to the named account. By mail: El Dorado Savings Bank, P.O. Box 14545, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151 – Account No.: 143015725.

• The official report from Lake Valley Fire, which is in charge of the investigation, should be released any day. Lake Valley Chief Gareth Harris told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The cause was accidental."

Opinion: Letting children serve food may help curb obesity issues

By Kayla Johnson

September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, and University of Nevada Cooperative Extension nutrition experts are urging parents to let their children serve themselves as a way to prevent overeating.

In Nevada, almost a third of children entering kindergarten are overweight or obese, according to UNCE nutrition experts. But there are ways to keep those statistics from increasing, and the effort should start at home, according to Madeleine Sigman-Grant, a University of Nevada Cooperative Extension maternal specialist.

One solution, Sigman-Grant said, is for parents to encourage self-serving.

It is common for parents to tell their child to clean their plate, but many children are being asked to eat more than they need, Sigman-Grant said. Allowing children to serve themselves helps keep portion sizes under control, Sigman-Grant said.

Self-serving is an important skill for young children as they learn to adjust their food intake to their energy needs. Doing so helps them make connections between serving and their eating cues. It also involves the development of motor skills such as holding utensils, passing food, using good manners and learning to share.

“Self-serving makes a preschool child a part of the family,” Sigman-Grant said. “They are doing something that their older siblings and parents are doing. They have the opportunity to take control over the amount they eat.”

Sigman-Grant considers self-serving a “messy” process, but the end goal is to get the child to become self-sufficient.

“In the beginning when the child first starts self-serving they will probably take too much,” Sigman-Grant said. “That is when the parent or the child-care provider comes in to alert the child how much they really need to eat and how hungry the child is. Within a week or two the child will adjust because it gives them control. There is no way a parent can tell how hungry a child is, so self-serving is a self-help tool and is another part of the child growing up.”

One worry for many parents who are hesitant to implement self-serving is that their child will not serve themselves enough and will not have the right kind of food.

“Getting enough food is something a lot of parents worry about because the rate of growth is very slow in toddlers and preschoolers compared to when they were infants so they don’t

need as much food," Sigman-Grant said. "If you offer healthy foods with a lot of variety in small meals then there should be no worries."

While self-serving can be messy and frustrating, it is beneficial for both the child and parents.

"The pride a parent feels in a child accomplishing a skill can never be underestimated," Sigman-Grant said.

Tips:

• Encourage children to serve themselves.

• Do not insist that children finish all of the food on their plates.

• Let your child serve one part of the meal –for instance, a pasta dish one day, and a vegetable side dish the next.

• Have your child say "when" as foods are being portioned to allow to have a role in how much they would like to eat.

• Avoid praising a clean plate. Allow children to decide how much is eaten.

• Talk to children about how their stomach feels before, during, and after the meal.

• Help the child and support the child as the child is taking the food.

• Trust your child to eat the amount that is right for him or her.

• Pay attention to portion size: If the first serving is small, a second will be OK. Don't eat out of cartons. Use kid-size cups and plates.

• Provide healthy food choices and then let kids learn how to rely on their own hunger and fullness cues.

Kayla Johnson is with the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

Opinion: Live Violence Free welcomes ED, moving forward

To the community,

Live Violence Free would like to formally welcome our Executive Director Frank Blakeney to our team and to this community. On Sept. 20, we offered an open house and meet-and-greet to the community so everyone would have the chance to come and personally welcome Frank to town. We had a great showing of South Lake Tahoe Community members who came to chat with Frank and staff about our continued mission for a violence free community.

Frank comes to Live Violence Free from Anchorage, bringing with him 10 years of experience in nonprofits. In his previous position, Frank served as state Director of Program Services for the Alaska Chapter of the March of Dimes. Frank lived in Alaska for 12 years where he also taught and earned his masters' of education in Guidance and Counseling. He moved to Alaska after his marriage to an "Alaska" girl, and there he and his wife Vickie welcomed four children.

Frank is excited to be in his new position with the challenges and opportunities it affords him. Frank stated, "My challenge is to make a very good agency even better."

With Frank officially welcomed, Live Violence Free is looking ahead to October, as it is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. To start off the awareness month, we are having a Candlelight

Vigil in honor of the victims in our community who have lost their lives to domestic violence. We invite the community to come walk with us from our office at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd. up the highway to the Lakeview Commons beach area in observance of DVAM. We will be meeting at Live Violence Free at 7pm Oct. 1 to assemble and light our candles.

For more information on the Candlelight Vigil and the other DVAM activities we have coming up, contact me at scaldwell@liveviolencefree.org.

Scarlet Caldwell, Live Violence Free

Opinion: GOP platform hurts Nevada

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

One of the reasons so many people hate politics is that well-meaning leaders often do more harm than good when they try to legislate public policy.

The Republican Party's attempt to protect people from themselves by pledging to oppose online gambling illustrates that point, and it could ultimately result in negative consequences for Nevada's tourism industry.

Nevada gaming professionals and government leaders worked diligently to deliver thoughtful online poker policies, draft regulations and begin issuing licenses. But the GOP platform

stands in the way of triggering play on a scale that would benefit our state.

The state is counting on some form of federal online gaming legislation to be approved for nationwide online poker play. And although the state Gaming Control Board and Nevada Gaming Commission are making a good first step issuing licenses for intrastate play, Nevada simply doesn't have the number of players needed to make online poker a game-changer.

The presumed next step would be to add players by developing compacts with other states and finding a way to share tax revenue with them. But the GOP platform is a new impediment.

Adopted at the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., under the category of "Making the Internet family-friendly," the platform states: "We support the prohibition of gambling over the Internet and call for reversal of the Justice Department's decision distorting the formerly accepted meaning of the Wire Act that could open the door to Internet betting."

It is hard to say what effect legalizing Internet poker would have on Nevada's casino industry. Some say it would drive people out of casinos and onto their computers to play. Others say online poker represents an opportunity to increase player volume because online competition builds a bigger pool of gamblers who eventually will want to experience live play in a casino poker room.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Time to rethink keeping pretrial suspects behind bars

By Lenore Anderson

Throughout the heated debates on the future of health care, one fact was never disputed: Overcrowded emergency rooms drive up the cost of care for all of us. Moving people who don't need emergency care to other settings for treatment allows ERs to focus on those most in need – and saves money.

Another indisputable fact is that some of California's county jails are reaching emergency status.

Here's why: After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2011 that California must reduce its state prison population, a landmark new state law – Public Safety Realignment – shifted responsibility for managing people convicted of nonviolent, nonserious, nonsexual offenses from state prisons to local counties. The state also divides up hundreds of millions of dollars among counties for this new responsibility.

Now it's up to local law enforcement and policymakers to ensure that the problem of state prison overcrowding isn't solved by simply overcrowding local jails.

The good news is that there is a proven way to reduce jail populations – and taxpayer dollars – without compromising public safety. The bad news is that too few counties fully utilize this approach.

The approach targets "pre-trial detainees." According to 2011 data, seven out of 10 people in county jails across California haven't been convicted of a crime. They're in jail – taking up beds and taxpayer dollars – awaiting trial, often for months

at a time.

Because many of these people are accused of less serious offenses, such as low-level property and drug offenses, judges set bail so they can await trial at home, not in jail. But many of these people remain in jail because they can't afford the bail amount.

This statewide challenge hits especially close to home: Included among the 2011 list of the 13 California counties with the highest percentage of pretrial detainees are Sacramento, 59 percent; Placer, 66 percent; Sutter, 81 percent; and Yolo, 90 percent – the highest in the state.

Since housing one person in jail costs local taxpayers $100 per day, compared to less than $15 a day for pretrial supervision, high rates of pretrial detainees were too costly for cash-strapped counties even before the law changed. Now that realignment is here, alternatives for low-risk people are a must.

A few counties are reaping the rewards of supervising pretrial detainees outside of a jail setting. Here's how it works:

• Trained staff assess risk by asking if community supervision jeopardizes public safety or the likelihood of the accused appearing in court.

• These experts then share their assessment and recommendations with the judge as to whether the person should be released and under what conditions.

• If the judge assigns the person to pretrial supervision, staff monitor the person in the community and ensure they make all court appearances and abide by all conditions – drug testing, electronic monitoring, curfews, home detention, etc.

• Some programs also offer drug screening, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and other programs as participants

await trial.

Santa Cruz County turned to this model years ago to reduce its jail overcrowding. Analysis of its program reveals 89 percent of participants appeared on their court date, and 90 jail beds were freed up each day – a 25 percent drop.

By 2011, Santa Cruz had reduced its pre-trial detention rate to 56 percent, well below the statewide average, which saved the county $857,513 in 2011 alone. The county has not requested any realignment funds to expand its jails, whereas a majority of California counties – less then one-third have robust pre-trial programs – have.

For example, Sacramento, Placer, Sutter and Yolo counties requested within the past year a combined $182 million in state funds for jail expansion. Fortunately, leaders in Yolo County have begun a pretrial supervision program, and its fellow counties across the state should follow its leadership. I recently contributed to a report by California Forward's Partnership for Community Excellence, to be released this week, that can guide counties.

Public safety – and the cost of maintaining it – is critical to the future of our state. Pretrial assessment and supervision are the new way, and it must become the rule, not the exception.

During the health care debate, no one suggested building larger waiting rooms at hospitals. We should look beyond the Band-Aid solution of expanding jails. Safely reducing overcrowding, not coping with it, is better for public safety and taxpayers.

Lenore Anderson, formerly with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, is director of Californians for Safety and Justice, a campaign working to replace prison system waste with common sense solutions.

Opinion: Sage grouses' fate subject to power grab

By Cliff Gardner

I don't know how many folks have read Gov. Brian Sandoval's sage grouse plan, recently completed and released. I was fearful of what it might entail.

I had no idea it would be as bad as it is.

By all appearances, it should be titled the "Kenneth Mayer Plan" rather than the governor's plan.

It designates the Nevada Department of Wildlife, directed by Kenneth Mayer, as the primary agency for making habitat determinations in consultation with the federal Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

It calls for the establishment of a "regulatory process" for the management of all occupied, suitable and potential habitat for the ground-dwelling bird.

It calls for the creation of an advisory council, which will mirror the makeup of the Governor's Sage Grouse Advisory Committee, whose responsibility will be to resolve conflicts between industry, land owners and resource managers.

It calls for the establishment of a sage grouse mitigation program – similar to what was established in Southern Nevada for the desert tortoise, whereby those altering landscapes will be allowed to proceed only when certain amounts of money are paid into a fund that is to be used for sage grouse enhancement projects.

It calls for the creation of a “technical team” – using the Tahoe Conservation Team as a model – with the responsibility of providing consultation for those wanting to conduct activities in occupied or potential sage grouse habitats.

It’s hard to believe that persons calling themselves Americans would be advocating a program of this nature. Clearly, the plan is designed not to help sage grouse, the environment or anything else. It is designed to advance the goals of those in government. It’s a power grab of the worst kind.

Cliff Gardner is a cattle rancher in the Ruby Valley, south of Elko.