Opinion: More wilderness designations bad for Tahoe basin

To the community,

We are very concerned as we follow the dialogue focused on the U.S. Forest Service Draft Management Plan. Some of the proposals could possibly ban assorted recreational use or allow for increased logging and mining in the Tahoe basin.

For more than 30 years, have enjoyed the incredible beauty of the areas slated to be turned into “wilderness” – funny, we thought much of it was already pretty wild. The lands in question have never needed special signage or designation in order to be enjoyed by those who mountain bike, snowmobile, snowshoe and/or cross country ski. For those who live here, these spectacular areas are our “backyards”. They exist as public lands for all.

Nonetheless, areas have previously been closed without opportunity for public input; eliminating snowmobiling in High Meadows is a perfect example. To think that current and future generations may lose the opportunity to experience these unique areas is truly upsetting. Isn’t that why many of us have chosen to live in this incredible place?

Call us spoiled, but we realize how lucky we’ve been to be able to get on a bike (in town) and ride to many of these trails without ever having to get in a car. There’s enough room for everyone to enjoy these places and it is ludicrous to consider restricting access to the tax-paying public who live and visit here unless they’re willing and able to hike or ride a horse to these areas. Although we’ve become more limited in our own ability to “power ourselves” to some of these remote areas, the proposed restrictions could prohibit us from ever

enjoying these places again.

Let’s not forget that in many cases, it has been “locals” contributing their time and sweat equity to create and maintain these trails. We thank you.

No one needs to be reminded that in these challenging economic times, our community must do all it can to support the visitors who come to enjoy the outdoor experience of the Tahoe basin. Like them or not, these same visitors ultimately help support all of us. It is interesting to note that Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the TRPA recently commented (read column on *LTN* from July 22, 2012) on the various positive impacts of biking in our community. As for motorized sports, one only has to look to our Mammoth Lakes neighbors to see how they have embraced snowmobiling and cross country skiing/snowshoe enthusiasts by developing an incredible system of shared and single use trails.

It requires minimal effort for those who support quiet and/or “no tracks” activities to access thousands of acres of beautiful terrain (think Desolation Wilderness). For those “proponents of increased wilderness designation” who visit Tahoe, do you travel by public transportation to do so? Seems quite hypocritical to say you wish to protect the environment and natural habitats, yet use mass paper mailings to support the cause.

Should a wilderness designation be granted, those who do not or cannot hike or ride a horse will not only have to travel even greater distances than we do now to access the ever-shrinking motor and bike-friendly recreation areas, it will also concentrate too many people in too small an area: how do these actions protect and respect the environment in the long term?

Placing a wilderness designation on more areas in the Tahoe basin will sorely impact recreational enthusiasts of all

abilities and interests. It would be foolish to deny that there is a minority who do not respect back country etiquette but please don't create a situation that would criminalize the majority of us who wish to continue enjoying our "backyards" as we've done for many years.

Eddie and Susy Walker, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: For those who want to lead, they better read

By John Coleman, Harvard Business Review

When David Petraeus visited the Harvard Kennedy School in 2009, one of the meetings he requested was with author Doris Kearns Goodwin. Petraeus, who holds a PhD in International Relations from Princeton, is a fan of Team of Rivals and wanted time to speak to the famed historian about her work. Apparently, the great general (and current CIA director) is something of a bibliophile.

He's increasingly an outlier. Even as global literacy rates are high (84 percent), people are reading less and less deeply. The National Endowment for the Arts (PDF) has found that "[r]eading has declined among every group of adult Americans," and for the first time in American history, "less than half of the U.S. adult American population is reading literature." Literacy has been improving in countries like

India and China, but that literacy may not translate into more or deeper reading.

This is terrible for leadership, where my experience suggests those trends are even more pronounced. Business people seem to be reading less – particularly material unrelated to business. But deep, broad reading habits are often a defining characteristic of our greatest leaders and can catalyze insight, innovation, empathy, and personal effectiveness.

Note how many business titans are or have been avid readers. According to the New York Times, Steve Jobs had an "inexhaustible interest" in William Blake; Nike founder Phil Knight so reveres his library that in it you have to take off your shoes and bow; and Harman Industries founder Sidney Harman called poets "the original systems thinkers," quoting freely from Shakespeare and Tennyson. In Passion & Purpose, David Gergen notes that Carlyle Group founder David Rubenstein reads dozens of books each week. And history is littered not only with great leaders who were avid readers and writers (remember, Winston Churchill won his Nobel prize in Literature, not Peace), but with business leaders who believed that deep, broad reading cultivated in them the knowledge, habits, and talents to improve their organizations.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Public should contribute to loop road

alternatives

Publisher's note: ***This letter was read at the Aug. 21, 2012, South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting by the author, longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Gloria Hartoonian, and is reprinted with permission.***

At the very end of the Aug. 21 City Council meeting, I heard Councilman [Hal] Cole suggest that our Tahoe Transportation District representative, Miss [Angela] Swanson, return to this council with five additional options for the loop road project. Out of the five, a subcommittee of the City Council would narrow the choice to three alternatives. And of these three, participants of a public workshop would then consider and choose the alternative that would be implemented by the TTD.

In this way Mr. Cole suggests that the city can reassert ownership of the loop road process on behalf of its citizens.

We should remember, however, that among the 50 alternatives, all but one was discarded by the TTD, so we will be considering already rehashed and discarded ideas. And by asking the TTD to send us five of these already discarded alternatives, the TTD, not you and the community, retain ownership of the loop road project.

The TTD could send back five ideas all unacceptable except the best of the bad that being the one our community has already rejected.

I don't know what the solution to this problem is, but several council meetings ago many business and homeowners came forward and offered new possible ideas for the implementation of the road. To my mind these citizens were already trying to take ownership of the process by offering new ideas.

The upcoming workshop should be open to fresh possibilities

from the community or else a subcommittee of this City Council – two of you – will have already narrowed the choices the rest of us may or may not want.

How this council shapes the public workshop – the openness and flexibility it allows – will determine its outcome.

Please avoid making the workshop manipulative, delivering a loop road alternative that pleases perhaps not even the majority of yourselves.

– Gloria Hartoonian

Opinion: FCC crossing the line trying to regulate news

By Corydon B. Dunham

While recent protests over proposed legislation addressing media entertainment piracy were loud and widespread, the public seems unaware of an even greater threat to our free speech and a free press.

People voiced concern about whether SOPA and PIPA (the House and Senate piracy bills) would limit free speech on the Internet. But the resurrection of television's old Fairness Doctrine, so government could again edit and censor news is a far more ominous threat.

The Federal Communications Commission has drafted a policy for government control of news. And even though a special study last year recommended that such a censorship policy be scrapped, it's still pending, with the potential for action. Frankly, I'm surprised there is no outcry or debate about this

political threat to distort news and speech and suppress them.

The FCC's proposed new Localism, Balance and Diversity Doctrine mirrors many aspects of the long-dead Fairness Doctrine. That doctrine was revoked in 1987 when the FCC and the courts found that it had suppressed news, chilled speech, imposed censorship, prevented criticism of the administration then in office, and created an atmosphere of "timidity and fear."

The new localism doctrine is very similar. It would force television stations to provide government "localism" in news production and coverage – as well as revise news reports to comply with government dictates on news balance and viewpoint diversity. Failure to comply could mean loss of the station license to broadcast.

It may sound good to some people, but in the past, government investigations and regulation enforcement deterred news broadcasts about public and political issues. To keep their broadcast licenses, stations had to conform their news and political reports to what they believed FCC commissioners would approve or revise news reports to what the commissioners did approve.

The FCC finally revoked that doctrine as against the public interest. Since the FCC is planning to transfer to the Internet the broadcast spectrum now used by local TV, news websites ultimately could fall under the new Internet rules.

Here are some highlights of the old doctrine and the new one:

• The Fairness Doctrine ruled TV news broadcasters from 1949 to 1987. Believing that the communication power of this, at the time, new medium concentrated great power in few hands, the government mandated that broadcast stations provide what the FCC would decide and dictate as appropriate "contrasting view" coverage.

• Under the Localism Doctrine, enforcement would not only be the job of the FCC, but also of a local board added at each station to monitor programming, including news. The members of that board would be required to recommend against a station's license renewal if they thought station programming news was not complying with this new FCC policy on localism, balance and diversity.

• Under localism rules, a three-vote majority of five politically appointed FCC commissioners at a central government agency would make local news judgments. They would override independent, local TV reporters and editors to impose government agency views on what should be reported and how.

This new policy, if activated, would directly target news and speech on television and enable an administration to use news coverage to manipulate and influence public opinion about important public and political issues. The effect would inevitably be something quite different from independent news.

That isn't speculation. It's history.

Corydon B. Dunham is a former 25-year NBC-TV executive and author of "Government Control of News: A Constitutional Challenge".

Opinion: Demand California adhere to Brown Act

By Dan Tatzin

I do not envy the challenge facing California's legislators and Gov. Jerry Brown. The bursting of the housing bubble, high unemployment, reduced property values and the never-ending Great Recession, coupled with the rising cost of government, have triggered a financial debacle from which state government may not recover for a decade. Even in difficult times, however, state officials should not forget the words of the Declaration of Independence: "Governments … [derive] their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Pursuant to that spirit, in 1953 California adopted the Ralph M. Brown Act, which demanded that lawmakers make decisions openly and deliberate before the public. "The people of this State," states the act, "do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created."

Our lawmakers have seemingly forgotten these commands.

In what was billed as a cost-saving move, the Legislature and the governor recently suspended portions of the Brown Act — specifically those ordering local governments to post notices of public meetings in advance.

Don Tatzin is a member of the Lafayette City Council, which will continue to follow the Brown Act.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Parents need to give kids space to grow

By Madeline Levine

The brief reprieve of summer is almost over, and parents everywhere are bracing themselves for the return to school. Back to the homework wars, the grade worries and the endless carpools to a dizzying array of extracurricular activities. Back to the feeling that we have to be ever-vigilant in order to optimize our children's performance and hoping that somewhere down the line, whether that's this year or in a decade, it will all pay off with a letter of acceptance (preferably several) from a prestigious college or university.

We're worried and, in light of the miserable economy and the reality of global competition, with good reason. We want to make certain that in uncertain times, our kids have a leg up. But here's the irony: Our constant oversight, our over-parenting isn't doing what we think it's doing. Rather than giving our kids a leg up, it's making them less resilient, less resourceful and less engaged with learning. In other words, over-parenting makes our kids less, not more, likely to succeed.

Counterintuitive as it seems, the very things we're doing to secure our children's futures can end up compromising them. Pushing and over-scheduling prevent them from becoming competent adults capable of the resilience, perseverance, motivation and grit that business leaders say they'll need to compete in tomorrow's workforce. Just as importantly, it interferes with the ability to cultivate healthy relationships and to feel that life is meaningful.

Many parents have significant misunderstandings about how children learn and what circumstances are likely to drive success in them. Our (culturally sanctioned) faulty thinking is pushing us to do, in many cases, the exact opposite of what kids need to thrive.

Madeline Levine is a psychologist, consultant, educator and co-founder of Challenge Success at the Stanford University School of Education. She is the author of "Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success".

Read the whole story

Opinion: Partnerships will save Lake Tahoe

By Joanne Marchetta

The 16th annual Lake Tahoe Summit, held on the lakeshore at Edgewood Tahoe on Monday, opened with beautiful sunshine after a refreshing rain that, quite literally, cleared the air as federal, state, and local officials, and members of the science, business and conservation communities all came together with a singular focus on protecting and restoring Lake Tahoe.

This year's summit theme of public-private partnerships showcased the important role they will play in future restoration efforts at Lake Tahoe. With the sun-setting of funds from Southern Nevada federal land sales and diminished funding from all levels of government that have traditionally fueled much of the restoration work here in Tahoe, a new model of environmental restoration is needed. Supporting and

encouraging the private sector to invest in environmental redevelopment and restoration projects is a promising path forward. It is one that has already shown positive results here in the Lake Tahoe Basin.



Joanne Marchetta at the 2012 Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. Photo/LTN

For example, when the Heavenly Mountain Resort master plan was adopted, the phased restoration of upper Edgewood Creek near Stateline was funded by Vail Resorts. And on lower Edgewood Creek, where the stream passes through Edgewood Golf Course, restoration of the lower reaches are proposed as part of the hotel and golf course realignment project. In addition, stormwater from the highway crossing the creek will be filtered in ponds on the golf course significantly reducing stormwater treatment costs for Nevada taxpayers.

The Lakeside Trail recently completed in Tahoe City was financed with government and private funds including the California Tahoe Conservancy, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, and the Tahoe Fund, while local contractors, engineers and planners did much of the work. In addition, private property owners donated easements for the public trail through their properties and one business substantially modified its operations to allow for safe public use. With

collaboration, the Lakeside Trail, with its beautiful design and stormwater treatment components is an unqualified success to be enjoyed by local families and visitors alike.

South Lake Tahoe's new Lakeview Commons park is also a great public-private partnership success. Funded largely by public money, the project has environmentally restored a neglected area of shoreline, but has also been an economic boon to local businesses and concessionaires benefiting from the large number of people flocking to the park for great outdoor events or just to take in the view.

And who can forget Fred Jackson, owner of the Tahoe Lobster Company, and the latest entrepreneur to dip his toe (or crayfish traps) into the lake as he commercially harvests a troubling invasive species at Lake Tahoe in a successful new business venture that is also helping the environment.

TRPA is prioritizing partnerships like these through key policies in the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan update that could be approved by the TRPA Governing Board in December of this year. The draft policies create incentives for property owners in town centers to redevelop in a way that incorporates water quality improvements with pedestrian and transit improvements for greater community benefit. Other proposed updates would reward homeowners for completing stormwater BMPs by allowing additional land coverage. These innovative proposals will open opportunities for a vigorous redevelopment market that will lead private sector restoration efforts using 21st century public-private partnerships.

More good news out of this year's summit: key stakeholders are collaborating and compromising in unprecedented ways to protect Lake Tahoe. The bi-state consultation efforts led by California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird and Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Director Leo Drozdoff delivered a suite of policy recommendations designed to forge agreement on long-outstanding differences involving

the Regional Plan update. New levels of cooperation among states, agencies, organizations and individuals may hold promise not just for the lake, but equally for ourselves.

Elsewhere, compromise has become elusive; holding strong on our differences preserves only the status quo. As we move toward a collective goal of completing the Regional Plan update by the end of this year, my hope is this: that the many people who love this region make it a habit to really listen to those whose vision for the future is slightly different than their own. For Lake Tahoe, cooperation, collaboration, compromise and partnerships are habits we should keep if we wish to secure a healthy and sustainable future now, and for generations to come.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Opinion: Guns are not the problem

By Tom McClintock

In its editorial ("Why Does Anyone Need a 100-Round Rifle Clip," Aug. 5), the *Sacramento Bee* notes that I "failed to respond" to its inquiries. The editorial amply demonstrates the reason: the *Bee* is notorious for stating one-sided political manifestos, listing its heroes and villains, and offering no opportunity for a balanced debate.

In the event I am mistaken and the *Bee* actually welcomes a

differing viewpoint, here is mine.



Tom McClintock

The inherent fallacy of all gun bans is that only law-abiding citizens obey them. Violent predators already operate in an extensive underground economy and such laws merely incentivize and reward an additional criminal class to traffic in the contraband.

Gun bans might make it more difficult for lunatics to obtain them, but they make it impossible for the law-abiding. The *Bee* notes that guns make it easier for a criminal to commit a crime, but forgets that guns also make it easier for the law-abiding citizens to defend themselves, as thousands do every year.

Indeed, the theater in Aurora that banned firearms on its premises became a tragic microcosm of the world the *Bee*'s policy would produce: a defenseless civil society in which the gunman is king.

The *Bee* lost this argument long ago and is now reduced to chipping away at ancillary issues like limiting ammunition clips. After all, no legitimate target shooter or hunter can justify a gun with more than ten rounds. The *Bee* wonders why any decent citizen would want more?

I certainly wouldn't.

Unless, perhaps, I worked the night shift at a convenience store; or I owned a theater where such an attack could happen

again; or I owned a ranch or home near the border where drug cartels often operate; or if I were planning to take a sailboat into international waters; or one of countless other reasons the law simply cannot anticipate.

The *Bee* asserts that gun related deaths have dropped faster in California than the rest of the nation and credits its strict gun laws. True, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, between 1994 and 2010 violent crime in California declined 56.5 percent while falling 43.4 percent nationally – a 13-point difference. But the *Bee* somehow missed the other half of this statistic: non-violent crime in California (unaffected by its gun laws) dropped by a nearly identical spread, (48.9 percent compared to 36.7 percent nationally).

What would account for an equal decline in violent and non-violent serious crimes in California since 1994 relative to the rest of the nation? Perhaps harsher sentencing laws in the 1980s, culminating with California's "Three Strikes" law of 1994 that locks up repeat offenders for violent and non-violent serious crimes explain the statistics far better.

Of course, the *Bee* opposed the "Three Strikes" law when voters enacted it. The editorial was ironically entitled, "Shooting Ourselves in the Foot."

Tom McClintock represents the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin in the House of Representatives.

Opinion: El Dorado County not

happy with fire fee

By Ray Nutting

With over 51,000 property owners in the El Dorado County expected to receive bills from the state for fire prevention, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors wants to know how the county can help.

The public should know what's coming. This "fee" is nothing but a scheme allowing the state of California to pick the pockets of rural residents.



Ray Nutting

The State Fire Prevention Fee was authorized last year by the governor and Legislature as part of the state budget package. The fee will be $150 for each habitable structure located within CalFire's jurisdiction known as the State Responsibility Area. A $35 dollar credit applies to structures that are also located within a local fire district.

Last year the Board of Supervisors attempted to appeal the fire fee on behalf of all affected property owners in El Dorado County. The appeal was rejected by CalFire because the law does not allow appeals until an actual bill has been received.

Concerns have been expressed about the accuracy of the maps and information the state used to determine to generate the fire fee bills. The state has set up a website, www.firepreventionfee.org with additional information about the fee and the appeal process. Although it remains unclear at

this point, it is likely that residents will require documentation from the county in order to file an appeal.

We'll want to position the county government to help residents through their appeal process as best we can.

Nutting also suggested that the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association will likely initiate litigation over the state fire fee. Personally I think the county should explore filing a friend-of-the-court brief once litigation is under way.

The governor and Legislature have overspent for years, and are now forcing us to write personal checks to cover their recklessness. Next we'll be required to feed and house the King's army.

The Board of Supervisors will discuss the new fire fee at the Aug. 14 Board meeting which begins at 9am at 330 Fair Lane, Placerville.

Ray Nutting represents District 2 on the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

Opinion: Comparing sports to politics

By Thomas Sowell

It has long seemed to me that there is far more rationality in sports, and in commentaries on sports, than there is in politics and in commentaries on politics. What has puzzled me is why this is so, when what happens in politics has far more

serious effects on people's lives.

To take one common example, there are many people who believe that if the market fails, the government should step in. But, if Robinson Cano strikes out, does anyone suggest that the Yankees should send in a pinch hitter for him on his next time at bat?



Thomas
Sowell

Everyone understands that a pinch hitter can also strike out, and is less likely than Cano to get a hit or a home run. But the very possibility that the government can fail when it steps in to substitute for a failing market seldom occurs to many people. Even among some economists, "market failure" is a magic phrase that implies a need for government intervention.

We could argue about the empirical evidence as to when government pinch-hitting is better or worse. But there is seldom even an argument at all in some quarters, where government intervention follows market failure as the night follows the day.

Milton Friedman once pointed out, "A system established largely to prevent bank panics produced the most severe banking panic in American history." Many other examples could be cited where government intervention made a bad situation worse.

But most discussions of the role of government never even reach the point of looking for empirical evidence. Today, for

example, there is much gnashing of teeth in the media because Democrats and Republicans can't seem to get together to create a bipartisan plan for government intervention to solve our current economic problems.

Those who cry out that the government should "do something" never even ask for data on what has actually happened when the government did something, compared to what actually happened when the government did nothing. That could be a very enlightening trip through the archives.

Sports statistics are kept in a much more rational way than statistics about political issues. Have you ever seen statistics on what percentage of the home runs over the years have been hit by batters hitting in the .320s versus batters hitting in the .280s or the .340s? Not very likely.

Such statistics would make no sense, because different batters are in these brackets from one year to the next. You wouldn't be comparing people, you would be comparing abstractions and mistaking those abstractions for people.

But, in politics and in commentaries on political issues, people talk incessantly about how "the top one percent" of income earners are getting more money or how the "bottom 20 percent" are falling behind. Yet the turnover in income brackets over a decade is at least as great as the turnover in batting average brackets.

In the course of a decade, the top 400 income earners include a couple of thousand people. The income received by the top 400 (as a statistical bracket) has risen, both absolutely and as a share of all income, even while the average income of the average person who was in that bracket at a given time has fallen by large amounts. How can this be? The short answer is turnover.

Turnover in sports creates no such confusion.

If players A, B and C all have batting averages in the .320s this year and, put together, they hit 100 home runs, while players X, Y and Z all have batting averages in the .320s next year, and together they hit 120 home runs, we could say that .320s hitters were increasing the number of home runs they hit. But A, B and C could easily be hitting less than 100 home runs next year.

It all depends on whether you are talking about what is happening in statistical brackets or what is happening to actual flesh-and-blood individuals who were in those brackets at one time but not another time. We understand that when we talk about sports statistics. But not when we talk about statistics on political issues like income differences.

Do our IQs just drop spontaneously when we turn to politics? Or are there many people in politics and the media with vested interests in misstating issues, and lots of experience in doing so? I think it is the latter, especially during an election year.

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