Opinion: Olympic bid more about money than spirit of competition

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

When the curtain rose on the Olympic Games over the weekend, millions of people saw Big Ben, Tower Bridge, the London Eye and other British tourism icons.

It’s the kind of publicity you can’t buy. The images broadcast on televisions worldwide reminded people that London would be a pretty cool place to visit.



Olympic spirit is everywhere in London, including the Tower Bridge. Photo/Kathryn Reed

That’s exactly the kind of publicity Nevada hoped to get in 2022. Northern Nevada was on a short list of places angling to host the Winter Olympics that year.

The selection process for host cities is two-tiered. First, American venues compete with one another to win over the U.S. Olympic Committee. Once a U.S. venue is selected, the competition moves to the global stage, and the International Olympic Committee evaluates sites from around the world. The winning bid is determined in a series of elimination votes.

A Nevada-California bid has a lot going for it. Heavenly Mountain Resort in California and Nevada has been pegged for alpine ski events. Squaw Valley in California has the experience of hosting the 1960 Winter Olympics and could host other skiing events. Arenas in Sacramento and San Jose could handle hockey and figure skating, while a refurbished Mackay Stadium at UNR has been identified for hosting opening and closing ceremonies.

The effort wouldn't be without challenge. Three other cities have expressed interest.

Read the whole story

Opinion: U.S. Senate lacks giants of yesteryear

Dana Milbank, Washington Post

Four years ago this week, Ted Kennedy changed history with the sheer force of his will.

Senate Democrats, battling with the Bush administration, were one vote short of the total they needed to maintain a key provision of Medicare. Harry Reid, the Democratic leader, then used a lifeline: He called Kennedy, who was in Boston receiving chemotherapy for brain cancer, and pleaded for the liberal giant to return to Washington to provide the clinching vote. When Kennedy walked onto the floor on July 9, 2008, senators on both sides erupted in cheers, and some wept. The Medicare bill passed – with nine Republican senators switching their previous votes to be on Kennedy's side.

Among those cheering the loudest that day was Utah Republican Orrin Hatch, Kennedy's longtime legislative partner, who wrote a song for Kennedy upon learning of his friend's illness and eulogized him at his memorial a year later.

I was reminded of this moment when talking in recent days with senators and veteran Capitol Hill correspondents about what has gone wrong in the Senate. A leading theory: There are no giants in the chamber today, no figure with the stature of a Kennedy who could carry 10 votes with his mere presence. There is no longer a revered figure — a Byrd, a Dole, a Moynihan, a Chafee, a Nunn, a John Warner — whose authority could transcend party and the usual arithmetic of vote counting. Some have died. Some have retired. Others, such as Hatch and John McCain, have been lost to the exigencies of survival in a hyperpartisan political system.

Read the whole story

Opinion: South Lake Tahoe on the right track

To the community,

I'm writing to show my gratitude for the recent strides being made toward making our town a better place to live. The free concerts at Lakeview Commons, the bike path improvements, and the modernization of our schools are examples of how our community is moving in the right direction.

And by revamping our town, we're also protecting our lake. Right now, 74 percent of pollutants running into Lake Tahoe come from aging strip commercial development and roadway

network harming both our economy and environment.

I realize this progress is only the beginning of a bigger picture of improvement envisioned by many in town. In particular, I've been following the TRPA's Regional Plan update (RPU) process and I support its vision to create a walkable, bike-friendly and basically safer place for us to live, work and raise families.

Our family enjoys living here, but often we don't feel safe walking or riding our bikes around city streets. As a LTCC PE instructor and parent involved with the Spanish immersion program at Bijou, as well as youth sports, I've heard similar concerns from friends and families (of not feeling safe walking around or biking within our town). It's reassuring to know that the RPU is addressing these issues in the following ways:

Creating town centers that are walkable, bicycle and transit-friendly;

Increased connections between town centers that result in fewer auto trips;

Revitalization of existing "Town Centers";

Replace/upgrade buildings for environmental protection and energy efficiency.

With the RPU and the help of various organizations in town, I envision a place where people are out of their cars more, taking public transportation, walking and riding bikes all within a safe infrastructure. SLT is finally headed in the right direction. Let's all get involved and help create the best outcome possible. If you want your voice to be heard or would like more info, check out the user-friendly website TahoeFuture.org. It's helpful and includes comprehensive info all in one place.

Here’s to our renewed South Lake Tahoe.

Jen Spina, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Title IX was terrible for female coaches

By Megan Greenwell

I once had a soccer coach who stalked the sideline in cowboy boots, snarling helpful commentary such as “Man up!” and “Don’t be a sissy!” When I broke my arm diving for a ball during practice, he asked if I was going to “cry like a girl” or get back in position. Being a 14-year-old girl, I cried.

I never played for anyone else who seemed to disdain girls quite like Coach Cowboy Boots, but he did have something in common with every other coach I had during 15 years of playing organized sports: a Y chromosome. From kindergarten rec-league soccer through two years of Division I college fencing, I never played for a female coach.

That puts me in good company. Female college athletes have never been less likely to have a female coach. The same trend holds in this summer’s Olympics: Of the five sports in which the United States is fielding a women’s team under a single head coach — basketball, field hockey, soccer, volleyball and water polo — only the soccer coach is a woman.

Surprised? After all, opportunities for female athletes have skyrocketed since Title IX prohibited gender-based discrimination in educational institutions 40 years ago this summer. More than 200,000 women play college sports today,

compared with 16,000 in 1972. When the Olympics opened on Friday, the U.S. team included more female athletes than male ones for the first time.

And there's the dirty little secret of Title IX: Female coaches have become a casualty of the same law that provided such huge benefits to female athletes. In 1972, more than 90 percent of the people coaching women's teams were women. Today, that number is 43 percent, according to data compiled by two retired Brooklyn College professors who have tracked the number of female college athletes and coaches in the United States since Title IX became law.

The explanation for the downward trend is as simple as it is discouraging. By legitimizing women's sports, Title IX bestowed a new level of respect — and significantly higher salaries — on college coaching jobs, transforming them from passion projects for the most dedicated women's sports advocates to serious career paths. When she began her career at the University of Tennessee in 1974, legendary basketball coach Pat Summitt earned $250 a month. Before retiring at the end of last season, she drew a salary of more than $2 million.

As soon as salaries began to rise, more men became interested in jobs coaching women, says Judy Sweet, a longtime athletics administrator who became the NCAA's first-ever female athletic director of a combined men's and women's program at the University of California at San Diego in 1975. Assistant coaches of men's teams saw a chance to be promoted faster by applying to head-coach jobs on the women's side. Job opportunities doubled for graduating male athletes who weren't going pro but wanted to stay in the game. Athletic directors, whose ranks have always been overwhelmingly male, increasingly hired other men for open positions.

The result has been a consistent decrease in the percentage of female coaches. In 1987, the share of women's teams coached by women dipped below 50 percent for the first time. Since 2000,

men have been hired for more than two-thirds of open jobs coaching women’s teams.

“In too many cases, athletic directors take the easy way out,” Sweet says. “Instead of actively recruiting outside of their networks, they hire the people they already know, and their networks are likely to be male-dominated.”

In other words, the institutional factors that have kept women out of coaching in the Title IX era are the same ones that have kept them out of the ranks of executives and partners and board members. Study after study shows that men are more likely to hire other men across many professions, even when there are equally or better-qualified female candidates. That gradually discourages many women from applying for those positions, exacerbating the problem.

Meanwhile, women are almost never seriously considered for jobs coaching men — not a single woman coaches male Division I athletes in a team sport — so the total proportion of female coaches is less than 20 percent. The percentage of female coaches increases slightly at schools where a woman heads the athletic department but remains under 50 percent.

When girls and young women don’t have the chance to be coached by women, they lose an opportunity to have strong female role models. Having exclusively male coaches sends female athletes the message that coaching jobs aren’t for them. And when athletic directors consistently hire men over similarly qualified women, they send the message that men make better leaders.

Because I never had a female coach, my female sports role models were exclusively athletes, from Florence Griffith Joyner to Brandi Chastain. I was 15 when Chastain scored the championship-winning penalty kick in the 1999 World Cup, then ripped off her jersey in celebration. Though I was no longer playing soccer, I wanted to be just like her.

Chastain says that aside from serving as mentors, female coaches show their athletes a viable career path in the sport to which they've dedicated their lives. After the Women's Professional Soccer league folded this year – the second failed attempt to create a U.S. pro league – coaching college teams is one of the only ways for retired players to make a living in the game. And though the best female basketball players can get by in the WNBA, where salaries range from $36,570 to $105,000, coaching offers a much more stable option. Title IX was just the first step toward legitimizing women's sports; fully leveling the playing field means giving women a chance to make their game their career.

"Ultimately, I hope that women stay in sports if they've played their whole life and gained all this experience," Chastain says. "I would hope that they would be able to share it."

Chastain, 44, had a roughly equal number of male and female coaches during her soccer career, but she knows that's increasingly rare for younger athletes. The generation gap is apparent among coaches as well – especially in basketball, the most prominent women's college sport, which has seen the percentage of female coaches drop from 79.4 to 59.5 percent in the Title IX era. The most prominent female college coaches – Summitt, Stanford's Tara VanDerveer and Rutgers's C. Vivian Stringer, among others – are either retired or in the twilight of their careers. Although Summitt was replaced by a female assistant coach, the percentage of paid female assistant coaches has dropped in the past 20 years, weakening the national pipeline.

Sweet and an alliance of women are trying to reverse the trend. In 2003, Celia Slater, then the women's basketball coach at Division II Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla., earned an NCAA sponsorship for a series of four-day workshops designed to boost female college coaches' leadership and communication skills as well as their networks. Last year,

Slater and Sweet expanded the effort into the Alliance of Women Coaches, a professional-development group for coaches at any level that aims to increase the number of women in sports leadership.

But Sweet says she's not optimistic. "I wish I could say I think the numbers are about to stop going down, but the signs don't point that way," she says. "It requires breaking this cycle of male university presidents hiring male board members hiring male athletic directors hiring male coaches."

Qualified female candidates are out there, agrees Chastain, who volunteers as an assistant coach under her husband, Santa Clara University women's soccer coach Jerry Smith. Asked if she's considered becoming a professional coach, she sighs.

"I've put myself out there to U.S. Soccer and others several times, and I haven't heard back," she says. "I'm hoping it will happen at some point."

Megan Greenwell, a former Washington Post staff writer, is a Los Angeles-based writer and editor and co-founder of Tomorrow magazine.

Opinion: Olympics inspire a need for Team Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

I wanted to be an Olympian.

I could swim pretty well by age 4, was competing by age 6. I still love the backstroke most, and can do a lap of fly when I test myself.

A few problems arose, though, on my way to gold.

(OK, I really never was on the road to gold … only in my heart.)



Wimbledon will be home of the Olympics for the first time. Photo/Kathryn Reed

I don’t have what it takes to put in the hours of practice to be the best at any sport. I’m not that focused, not that disciplined. And, honestly, I was never that good even if I had the tenacity.

But something about the Summer Olympics grabs me every four years. I remember as a kid my friend Darla and I would have contests in our back yards. We made up a few sports – but we also “competed” in gymnastics and swimming.

I was in college in San Diego when the 1984 Games came to Los Angeles. My parents came down and took me to see volleyball and soccer. Just being at the Olympics, no matter the sport, was an incredible experience.

Through my travels I have had the opportunity to visit a few Olympic cities pre- and post-the events. Most recently it was the Olympic park in London.

The grandeur of the buildings even from the outside is worth touring.

More impressive for me was walking around the grounds of

Wimbledon. Oh, to just be able to go hit a few balls. Would I even see Serena's serve? This incredible tennis venue that each year mandates players dress in all whites will allow contestants to wear whatever colors they like during the Olympics.

Having been to London, Beijing and Vancouver in the past 2½ years, I can't help but think what it would be like for Lake Tahoe to host the Games. With 2022 out of the question, the soonest would be 2026.

I like how London built some of the facilities so the seating will be dismantled because those large venues would not be needed for "normal" competitions.

Train tracks go right behind the swimming pool, with a train station nearby. The Lee River will have water taxis.

Tahoe, with a little help from those who've done it, could figure out the transportation issue. Heck, the residents of Los Angeles figured out how to make it work – couldn't we?

We need better lodging. We need restaurants that understand the world is not full of meat eaters. We need shopping.

We need government and regulatory agencies to get out of the way of entrepreneurs and companies who want to invest in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The one area we are so lacking in is guest services. Managers need to leave Tahoe to see how friendly-responsive-accommodating other places are and then train their employees to be nice, to smile, to know what is going on in town.

We don't need a prosperity center or chambers plotting our future, we need common sense. We need to be a "we" and to stop asking, "How will ***I*** benefit? How will ***my*** business benefit?" It's time we got on the same team and asked, "What can ***I*** do to help ***my*** community so in turn ***my*** business benefits and ***I*** have

money in my bank account?” It will definitely mean compromising for the greater good.

Team Tahoe can prosper. But first we need to be a team and stop acting like we are in an individual sport – even if Tahoe never hosts the Olympics.

As for the Olympics, well, the Prosecco is chilled in anticipation of tonight’s Opening Ceremony. I will toast all those Olympians who have given their all for this one moment. I will have special interest in watching diving as Kristian Ipsen competes because I went to high school with his parents.

For the next two weeks I will live my Olympic dream through those men and women who are gathered in England. To me they are all winners, not matter if they medal.

Opinion: Parks officials insulted public with buyout shenanigans

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the July 18, 2012, Sacramento Bee.***

The California state parks system – as state government itself – is in deep budget trouble.

Yet that did not stop the head of one division within the state parks system – administrative services, which handles

accounting and personnel functions – from hatching a scheme to give himself and 55 managers immediate cash payouts for their unused vacation time.

This gaming of the system, by the very people who handle money transactions, came at a time when the state parks system was announcing the closure of 70 state parks and nonprofit organizations were striving to raise private funds to keep parks open. That $271,000 could have helped keep parks running.

This betrayal, detailed in a November 2011 internal audit and an April state attorney general's investigation – and reported by the *Bee's* Matt Weiser – is despicable. While names have been redacted, details make it clear that the ringleader was Manuel Thomas Lopez, who was deputy director of administrative services. But he was not alone. Others were complicit in the outrage.

These people deserve public censure – not redacted names in a report. They should be terminated, with letters in their files so they can't return as "retired annuitants" to state service. Those who falsified documents should be prosecuted.

Let us be clear. This scandal reveals not just corruption by individuals but problems with the state's vacation leave system.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Being on a jury is a

duty we should embrace

By Kathryn Reed

If I were accused of a crime, I would want to be tried by a jury of my peers. I would want people to carefully consider the evidence presented and decide if there were a reasonable doubt that would preclude them from rendering a guilty verdict.

While at times our system seems to be guilty until proven innocent, the Founding Fathers had it correct in their premise that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.



This is not a concept the world embraces. And it's a concept we often take for granted. It's also a process that involves all of us of voting age. It's a responsibility we should not shirk.

For the second time in my life (the other was college) I actually had to go to the courthouse for jury duty. On Monday night when I called the number to see if I needed to show up, I was filled with self-pity when the recording told me to be there at 8:30am.

Until I became self-employed, I had always wanted to serve on a jury. I've always had a fascination with the law and criminal justice system. The self-employed thing was going to make it difficult to serve on what was likely to be an eight-day trial.

I had to be reminded why it was an honor to be called.

"Civic duty" is what my mom called it when I was emailing her from court whining about being stuck inside on a beautiful Tuesday in Tahoe. At least from my office I have a window.

Judge Suzanne Kingsbury told the assembled group our willingness to serve as jurors is one thing that makes this country so great.

These two smart women made me reconsider my reluctance to spend the better part of the day at the El Dorado County courthouse in South Lake Tahoe.

Thirty-seven names were called to fill the first two rows. A few dozen of us remained in the back rows. We were all sworn to tell the truth.

During a break in the jury selection process I looked at the accused sitting alone at the table and wondered what he must be thinking as he looked at this diverse group that could have a profound affect on his life.

(Both sides face the “audience” during this process instead of the judge, as is the case when the trial is under way.)

He was certainly dressed better than everyone in the room except for his attorney who also had a tie on. His dress shirt was nicely pressed.

(Some prospective jurors had to be told to take their hats off, many were in T-shirts, most had nothing on that resembled being professionally dressed.)

Undue financial hardships, a pre-paid vacation and being a sole caregiver were likely reasons to be excused.

Two men with medical issues were told to get a written excuse from their doctor. A woman with young children was told to see if her husband could get time off from work to care for them. Firefighters were told if they were called to a wildland fire, the judge would adjust the schedule.

Then the charges were read. The defendant was accused of committing sexual penetration with a foreign object, child molestation and sexual battery.

Two women approached the bench and were subsequently dismissed. They looked shaken.

Kingsbury reminded the group that she was not asking them to put aside their beliefs, but to have an open mind.

We all would want that. We all owe that to the accused.

More questions for the first two rows. As answers were given the attorneys took notes.

At 10:50am we are dismissed for lunch; told to return at 1:30pm.

The case had been settled in that time. We were free to go.

Kingsbury couldn’t tell me the settlement agreement at that time, but said to check the transcripts today if I really wanted to know.

What I know is that it felt good to be part of the process. Jury duty never arrives at a good time. Nor is serving likely to be a good time. But sometimes it’s about doing my little part to make the system work. I would want that if I were the accused.

Opinion: Brown’s scheme to

fund schools is sketchy at best

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

The campaign to establish a state lottery nearly 30 years ago adopted “schools win too” as its theme. And it worked.

Voters responded because education is the single most popular category of public spending, even though in reality, the lottery provides schools with little or nothing in extra money.

This year, Gov. Jerry Brown is using the same theme to sell voters on raising sales and income taxes. The opening words of his measure’s official ballot title are “Temporary taxes to fund education …”

Whether schools would actually benefit from the taxes is very uncertain; he has, however, signed a bill that would slash school spending by $5.5 billion should it fail.

It’s a very risky strategy for a measure that, at the moment, has no better than a 50-50 chance of passage.

For one thing, a recent Field Poll found that voters don’t like school funds being on the chopping block. They could conclude that Brown is holding schools hostage and resent the implied extortion.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Access to information critical in emergency

By Adam McGill

The town of Truckee is working hard at better communicating with all those that visit or call Truckee home. With fire season upon us, it is now more important than ever to be able to communicate directly with the community in real time for important safety information. In an emergency seconds matter.

To that end, the Truckee Police Department has recently begun using an Internet-based software system known as Nixle. Nixle allows users to sign up free of charge online and elect to either receive text messages or emails from TPD. TPD uses this system to inform subscribers about police related activity in Truckee such as road closures and most important will use the system to alert users of an evacuation or other imminent safety information.



Adam McGill

To disseminate information quickly it is imperative to have as many subscribers as possible. Nixle guarantees your privacy and does not share your email address, wireless number, or any other personal information with the police department, nor does Nixle spam you with advertisements or other non-relevant notices. To do so would discourage new users and defeat the purpose of the system. Nixle is simply a public safety tool to

keep the community informed. Please take a moment to explore Nixle and consider signing up.

Although we hope to make Nixle our primary notification tool because of its efficiency and real time benefits, the town of Truckee will continue to use traditional forms of communication as well. In the event of an emergency in Truckee, such as a wildfire, information will be available from a number of sources. The police department will be providing information via Nixle, the town's website, Twitter and Facebook. The town will also be working with KTKE 101.5 to provide status updates and other important information to the community.

The town also has the ability to use an automated telephone call system to provide emergency notification to residents. Sacramento and local based television media often cover emergencies in our area and can be another source of information. During normal business hours information can also be obtained by calling the police department at (530) 550.2323.

The town takes seriously its role in emergency preparedness and works closely with our public safety partners to be ready for a major incident. Are you ready? You – are the real first responders. You are the first on the scene. Please take the time to prepare yourself and your family. Consider practicing with your family. Most important, have a family plan. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

For more information on how you can prepare yourself and your family check out this website and for wildfires visit the CalFire website.

Adam McGill is the Truckee police chief.

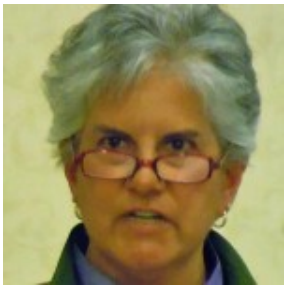
Opinion: Biking, walking have multiple environmental benefits

By Joanne Marchetta

Lake Tahoe is biking its way to a healthy, more environmentally sustainable future. In the first two weeks of June, more than 400 people around the Tahoe basin logged 13,800 miles and 3,800 bike trips just getting to work and doing errands as part of the Tahoe Bike Challenge. TRPA and the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition have put this event on seven years running to get people out on their bikes and to reinforce the commitment our communities have to multi-modal transportation, clean air and water. The data collected is used to help Lake Tahoe agencies make better decisions about biking facilities.

While there is a common understanding that TRPA is mandated to improve Lake Tahoe's air quality, you may not be aware of the inherent linkages among land use policies, transportation programs, economic strength, clearer water, cleaner air and healthier, more vibrant communities. I'd like to connect the dots for you.

Cleaner air and water



Joanne
Marchetta

The latest science shows that most air pollution at Lake Tahoe is coming from local pollutants created here in the Lake Tahoe airshed. Nitrogen emissions contribute to the growth of harmful algae that is clouding the lake. The size of our paved surfaces and the number of cars on our roads also contribute to the load of fine sediment washed into Lake Tahoe through streams, storm drains and stormwater runoff. Fewer vehicle trips and better community design are critical to improving both air and water quality and the goal of regaining the lake's famed clarity.

Economy

Thousands of visitors come to Lake Tahoe every year just to ride their bicycles. That's because Lake Tahoe offers some of the best cycling experiences in the West. Cyclists are estimated to bring between $6 million and $23 million in local direct expenditures annually to Lake Tahoe communities. As Lake Tahoe positions itself in the geotourism market and begins to diversify its local economies with a focus on recreation, health and wellness, bike trails and pedestrian-friendly town centers are critical investments.

Community

TRPA has benefited from broad community input on the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan update. One theme that we have heard over and over is the need for safer, more vibrant and walkable town centers. The current design of most of our town centers, with

sprawling parking lots and dirt road shoulders, sends a clear message that we are built for the car and that you are only welcome if you're in one. The emerging vision of the Regional Plan Update is to support bikeable, walkable communities which enhance the quality of life for locals and millions of visitors.

You can experience this more vibrant model of community design for yourself. Tahoe City's downtown sidewalks and the Lakeside Trail along with the pedestrian plaza at the Heavenly Village show the benefits of safe, pedestrian-friendly town centers. The Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, which is scheduled to break ground next year, promises to be an outstanding example of our emerging collective vision.

How we get there

TRPA is updating the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and Regional Transportation Plan this year with a priority focus on more bikeable, walkable communities. Draft policies increase the connectivity of bike facilities basinwide. Others guide the form and design of development in our town centers to provide incentives for property owners to improve their street frontage, share parking, create storefronts that engage pedestrians, and contribute to transit stops and bike lanes along the roadway. Property owners considering redevelopment will have real incentives to redesign our built environment in a way that doesn't revolve strictly around the car and that contributes to the vitality of our region.

There is no innovation without implementation. We are gathering specialists and experts in Tahoe this month to discuss what it takes for communities to reduce reliance on the private automobile. On July 25 and 26, we have guest speakers in town from Park City, a resort town similar to Lake Tahoe which managed the transportation needs of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, and from Portland, a region that has transformed itself into one of the most bicycle-friendly

places in the nation. We hope you can come out to hear from these experts.

If you want to learn about the strategies, challenges and solutions to improving our quality of life and environment, go online and plan to attend one of the upcoming educational opportunities on July 25 and 26 taking place on the South and North Shores.

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