Opinion: Distracted driving isn’t just a student problem

By Vicki Barber

A program to alert young drivers to the dangers of being distracted while driving is being quietly launched by student leaders, teachers and administrators at El Dorado County’s five public high schools and the county Office of Education.

Even a split-second distraction can have deadly or long-lasting consequences, and the advent of cell phones and other electronic devices has compounded the danger, according to Dan Stark of the California Highway Patrol, which is collaborating with the schools on the program in conjunction with California Casualty and the California Teachers’ Association.

Distracted driving now ranks at the top of causes of deaths of young persons from accidents, far ahead of driving under the influence causes, according to national statistics.



Vicki Barber

The narrow, winding roads of sprawling El Dorado County also increase the risks locally, especially when combined with inexperience and speed, Stark said.

Each year there are several serious or fatal accidents in the county, many of which are believed to be due to the driver being distracted by something. There were two fatal accidents

and one serious-injury accident last spring, one of which involved DUI and the other possibly related to distractions.

One administrator got the “distracted driving” message with abrupt clarity the day before he and other officials were to meet with Stark to hear about the proposed program, early last summer.

“What was ironic was that the day before I went to meeting my daughter (Alissa) was driving down Pleasant Valley Road and ran into the car in front of her.” She just had enough time to swerve so she sideswiped the car, escaping injury but totaling her car and seriously damaging the other vehicle.

The cause was clear: “Her cell phone rang and she glanced down to see who it was. She didn’t ever pick it up. But when she looked up the car was right in front of her,” Volmer said.

Alissa is now attending USC. But Volmer said he was shocked when he went to see the car and saw the extent of damage and realized how close a thing it was to being a life-changing tragedy.

And at the meeting the next day, “I heard enough to know I need to be a better example.”

Volmer said the program being rolled out is designed for students and parents, as well as teachers and staff. After being introduced to teachers and administrators it has been referred to student leaders so there would be a peer-to-peer message.

“Parents will need to set an example if the program is to be successful,” Jeremy Meyers, deputy superintendent of the El Dorado County Office of Education, said.

Meyers said the county office is fully behind the awareness-raising effort due to the increased incidents of distractions from the proliferation of electronic devices. But he noted

that there are many other causes of distraction, from eating. putting on make-up or talking with passengers.

Even if there is no injury or fatality involved, accidents can cost thousands of dollars in repairs, increased insurance rates, fines and court costs, and add negative points to one's driver's license – underscoring that driving is a serious responsibility and needs to be taken seriously, Meyers said.

The program has been implemented in the Lake Tahoe Unified School District for the past few years and the data regarding decreased teen driving accidents has been impressive. Other high schools involved in the program are Golden Sierra, Ponderosa, Union Mine and Oak Ridge.

Stark agreed that distracted driving is a problem that has been around for decades, but added that cell phones have made it worse in recent years.

He noted that about 75 percent of teen deaths from auto accidents are "not alcohol-related," while many of those involved being distracted.

Stark said the El Dorado County program will utilize materials and techniques developed by a broader program known as "Impact Teen Driver," founded by Jon Hamm, president of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen.

"CHP officers consistently report the worst part of their job is coming onto a scene where a young person has needlessly lost his or her life and subsequently having to ring a doorbell to tell parents that they will never again see their child alive," according to the website.

"The devastating impact of these fatal crashes on the teens involved, their families, communities, and the law enforcement officers who are first responders motivated the CAHP to work with one of its long-time partners, California Casualty, and the California Teachers Association to create a powerful

intervention designed to alter these grim statistics.”

Vicki Barber is superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education.

Opinion: Loop road project is a dream gone bad

To the community,

Once again the loop road has us going in circles. The first plan for the Park Avenue Redevelopment Area 1 (Stateline) contained not only a loop road, but a satellite city hall with two parking spaces for city customers, and a monorail connecting Stateline to Ski Run. The plan was driven by wishes, wishes that haven’t been fulfilled.

The current loop road plan is a planner’s dream, a dream that may turn into a nightmare because to do the loop as planned, workforce housing will have to be taken by the agency. Thus, the agency talks of using eminent domain to take property. A problem is the City Council on a vote of 5-0 killed future use of eminent domain in Redevelopment Area 1. Thus, the agency and the city are on a collision course.



Bill Crawford

And the loop road as dreamed of would reroute commercial vehicles through neighborhoods. The planners ignore the traffic of 18-wheelers and other large commercial vehicles. Also, regardless of what happens or doesn't happen, the 18-wheelers , etc., will always be with us. All that the planned loop road would achieve is a bottleneck because the 18-wheelers, etc., have to return to Highway 50 to complete the business of transporting goods and services from A to B. If the dreamers would wake up, they would realize that there is no satisfactory alternative to the present passage of vehicles through the casino canyon. We are hemmed in by the lake and the mountains. That's not likely to change. Not even by dreamers planning.

The message for me is, be what we seem to be. Minus the pretense, the community is a mountain border town locked into lost causes.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Government wants to regulate too much information

By Christopher Wolf

Should Congress be in the business of deciding what people can share through social media? That is the question considered at one of only three hearings so far by the Senate Judiciary Privacy Subcommittee. The three senators at the hearing each suggested that without legal restrictions, people might over-share information about what streaming videos they watch

online. That is, the senators are worried about TMI – too much information.

For some, regular sharing is TMI. For others, it is part of proactively shaping their online identities and an essential way to spread their ideas. Social media provides a wonderful opportunity for free expression and connection, but users need to be sensitive of the risks of TMI. In short, we need cyber-education, parental guidance and self-editing. But do we need a federal law limiting how much users share about their online movie watching?

The Senate Judiciary Privacy Subcommittee took up the issue as part of its review of the 1988 Video Privacy Protection Act. The act was passed in reaction to a newspaper reporter obtaining the video rental records of then-Supreme Court nominee Judge Robert Bork, and it restricts sharing rental records without a person's permission. Some read that law though as to prevent the use of automatic sharing tools that many Facebook users employ to share the music they listen to on the streaming music service Spotify, or the news articles they read on the Washington Post online. That reading of the law has inhibited the launch of a Netflix "frictionless" sharing tool, and there are calls for an amendment to the act to specify that frictionless sharing is illegal.

Netflix is not the only online streaming video service whose users may be foreclosed from sharing their viewing experiences. Amazon, Blockbuster, Hulu and Vudu offer streaming video services and their users (and those of services yet to be launched) also stand to be affected by a law that prohibits consumers from choosing to share their online viewing choices.

Christopher Wolf is the founder and co-chair of the Future of Privacy Forum.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Closing forest roads in El Dorado County is wrong

Publisher's note: ***On April 17 at the recommendation of Supervisors Ray Nutting and Ron Briggs, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors adopted the following public statement regarding the case of Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation v. U.S. Forest Service (E.D. Cal No. S-09-2523).***

El Dorado County is dismayed to learn that the plaintiffs in the U.S. District Court in the case of Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation v. U.S. Forest Service (E.D. Cal. No. S-09-2523) have asked the court to consider the blanket closure of 42 roads in the Eldorado National Forest because those roads happen to pass through very small meadow areas. The court has ordered those roads closed until a final order has been issued, which may cause the loss of a number of the most popular recreation trails in Eldorado County for this summer season.

These roads have been in use for recreation for decades (some for a century), and provide a unique and irreplaceable opportunity for citizens to enjoy the land which they own. The court's decision on the merits of the litigation found that the U.S. Forest Service must supplement its analysis of whether the roads crossing meadows affects the hydrology of the meadow, a process that the Forest Service estimates will take a full year, mostly because of the various procedural

time limits applicable to supplemental environmental impact statements under NEPA. The 42 roads total about 120 miles in length, of which less than 5 miles involve meadow areas, and 23 out of the 42 roads involve meadow crossings of less than 300 feet.

The court has extended the normal winter closure of all 42 roads into the summer recreation season, while it considers various alternative orders it might issue to be in effect during the period while the supplemental analysis is being done. The closure of all 42 roads for an entire summer recreation season just because they happen to pass through a meadow area for a short distance would be an unnecessarily blunt remedy that fails to maintain the status quo of many years of public use on those roads, and that fails to distinguish between different roads with different circumstances. For example, the Barrett Lake Trail has been in use for decades, and over the years has been upgraded and maintained by users so it is in a better condition to sustain its popularity without degradation of the environment than many other trails in the forest. It is considered a model of user-maintained road. It has several short sections involving meadows, but in many instances it has been re-routed around the meadow and in other sections it has been improved so that any hydrological problem has been eliminated. The Barrett Lake Trail ends at Barrett Lake, so that closing it at a short meadow section anywhere along its length effectively closes it entirely. The closure of this road for an entire recreation season is simply not justified by its particular circumstances. Furthermore, the closure of some of the most popular recreational roads in the Eldorado National Forest will divert users to other trails (such as the Rubicon Trail, a public road under R.S. 2477 and thus not involved in the current litigation), potentially overburdening these other trails which are not involved in the litigation.

Most important, a blanket closure of all 42 roads fails to

take into account the enormous negative economic impact this will have on El Dorado County (and the other counties affected by the closure – Amador and Alpine counties). Closure of 42 roads will discourage citizens from coming here to recreate this summer, and the resulting confusion and uncertainty will no doubt discourage recreational use of the Eldorado National Forest for subsequent seasons also. It has been estimated that vehicular recreation in the Eldorado National Forest produces a net positive economic effect estimated to exceed $2 million per year to El Dorado County. An order carefully tailored to recognize the decades of prior use of the 42 routes, which recognizes the different circumstances of particular roads among the 42 at issue, can help alleviate unnecessary damage to the local economy.

The environmental and planning laws must be honored, but in a way that is both rational and realistic, without causing unnecessary damage to a fragile economy, and without unjustified restrictions on a citizen's right to use federal land. El Dorado County believes that the roads should be kept open for this season while the remaining environmental analysis is being performed.

Opinion: Time for people to stand their ground against NRA

By E.J. Dionne Jr., Washington Post

It's understandable if unfortunate that the controversy surrounding the killing of Trayvon Martin has polarized the country along both racial and ideological lines. But there is

one issue that should not have any racial connotations: the urgency of repealing “Stand Your Ground” laws.

And leave it to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to speak the blunt truth about why these laws are dangerous – and why the National Rifle Association keeps pushing them anyway.

“In reality,” Bloomberg said in a speech before the National Press Club last week, “the NRA’s leaders weren’t interested in public safety. They were interested in promoting a culture where people take the law into their own hands and face no consequences for it. Let’s call that by its real name: vigilantism.”

On guns, Bloomberg is strong and everyone else is feckless, to paraphrase the late columnist Murray Kempton writing about an earlier mayor.

OK, not exactly everyone else. Bloomberg’s partners in the group Mayors Against Illegal Guns – notably Boston’s Mayor Tom Menino, the organization’s co-chair – have filled the void left in state legislatures, Congress and the White House by moderates, liberals and many conservatives who ought to know better but are too petrified by the NRA to confront it. Mayors face the daily toll taken by gun laws dictated by gun lobbyists and are less easily intimidated.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Warm weather not always good for pets

By Trista Cunningham

The warm weather is just around the corner and the American Red Cross has some steps people can take to make sure their pet is safe and healthy as we head into spring and summer.

April is Pet First Aid Awareness Month and Red Cross courses are available to teach people how to care for their pets. Dog and Cat First Aid Guides are available with a DVD that teach basic responsibilities like the importance of spaying/neutering and how to give medications, to performing CPR, recognizing if your pet is sick and preparing for disasters. The guides are available on the Red Cross Store.

For a list of Pet First Aid classes available in your area, call 800.RED.CROSS for information and to register.

Warm weather brings special pet concerns with it. For instance, leaving an animal in the car, even for a short time can be dangerous in warm weather.

“The inside temperature of the car can quickly reach 120 degrees,” said veterinarian Deborah Mandell, pet care adviser for the Red Cross. “It’s not a good idea to leave the pet in the car, even with the windows cracked open.”

Another problem for pets when the temperatures rise is heat stroke because pets are not yet acclimated to the warmer weather.

“Animals love to play and may not stop playing, even if they are becoming overheated,” Mandell said.

Dogs with short noses or snouts, like the boxer or bulldog, are prone to heat stroke. This is also true for any obese pet, a pet with an extremely thick fur coat or any pet with upper respiratory problems such as laryngeal paralysis or collapsing trachea. Even though some areas of the country have already experienced a few hot days, dogs still aren’t acclimated to those types of temperatures.

Some signs an animal may be developing heat stroke include heavy panting and being unable to calm down, even when lying down. Their gum color may be brick red, their pulse rate may be fast, or they may not be able to get up. If someone suspects their pet has heat stroke, they should take their temperature rectally. If their temperature is above 105 degrees, the owner should cool the animal down. The easiest way to do this is by using a water hose. They can stop cooling the animal when the temperature reaches 103 degrees, and should bring the pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible as heat stroke can lead to severe organ dysfunction and damage.

An open window or door can be a pet hazard. Pet owners need to be aware that animals may try to get out a window or door, which are more likely to be open as the weather warms. Spring planting can also be a pet hazard – do not use plants which are poisonous to animals. For instance, many lilies are very poisonous to cats. Visit the ASPCA Poison Control web site to find out which plants and flowers are poisonous to animals.

A pet is part of the family. Just like any other family member, pets deserve to be cared for and protected. Pet First Aid Awareness Month is a great time for people to learn how to protect their pet and keep them healthy. More information on how to keep pets in good health and safe can be found online and on the Red Cross Pets and Disaster Safety Checklist.

Trista Cunningham works for the American Red Cross.

Opinion: Transit officials not acting in public's best interest

By Kathryn Reed

On the same day the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board is scheduled to discuss the Regional Plan update there will be a community presentation on the loop road project.

But they will be separate, likely overlapping meetings. That means people have to decide which meeting to attend. How stupid is this? What are people thinking? Are they trying to cram the loop road through without scrutiny and due diligence? Oh wait, the diligence is met even if no one is there.

And it's an afternoon meeting. How many people affected by it – positively or negatively – could make it?

The transportation meeting was announced Friday. Yes, yesterday.

When the dual meeting was pointed out to Tahoe Transportation District officials by *Lake Tahoe News*, their flak Phil Weidinger responded, "TRPA will also be holding the RPU discussion at South Shore the following day.

"TTD has several meetings and various project deadlines approaching, including a presentation to the City Council on May 1, a board meeting on May 11 [to include the results from Wednesday's public meeting], plus other public forums and outreach to keep assignments moving, on track and to ensure deadlines are met."

Really?

The loop road has been talked about since the 1980s and now

there is a rush? When has the South Shore ever cared about deadlines? After all the Regional Plan was supposed to be updated in 2007.

LTN pointed out via email to Weidinger, TTD staff, South Lake Tahoe Mayor Claire Fortier (who is also on the TRPA Governing Board), Councilwoman Angela Swanson (who is also on the TTD board) and the TRPA flak, that the meetings on April 25 and April 26 do not have the same agenda items even though both pertain to the Regional Plan update. At least that is what TPRA has told *LTN*.

On top of that, the Wednesday TRPA meeting is in Incline Village and the transportation meeting is in Stateline. It's not possible to jump between the two meetings. TRPA officials have said to expect both of their meetings to be all-day events.

Considering the TTD and TRPA offices are in the same Stateline building on Market Street, better communication would be expected – unless of course, the transportation folks don't really want anyone to comment on taxpayer dollars being used to reroute traffic on Highway 50, or the uprooting of California residents to the benefit of mostly Nevada businesses.

Here is information about TRPA's meeting schedules.

As for the TTD meeting regarding the displacement of renters to the benefit of Stateline area businesses, the meeting is April 25 from 2-3:30pm at Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe.

The agenda says the meeting will include:

• Accurate updates, facts, information

• Impacts on neighborhood residents

• Impacts on businesses in the Village Shopping Center, Heavenly Village and along the Highway 50 corridor

• Current status of project

• Other issues like safety, economy, environment.

South Shore residents deserve better from transportation officials. Don’t make residents and power brokers decide which meeting to attend. Both are important. We deserve better.

Opinion: Selling of groundwater proves policy needs rethinking

By John Bredehoeft and Newsha Ajami

Imagine a lake half as large as Lake Tahoe, containing 17 million to 34 million acre-feet of water. That is what lies under the Cadiz and Bristol valleys in the Eastern Mojave Desert in San Bernardino County. Cadiz Inc., a privately held company, owns 34,000 acres that overlie this vast groundwater basin. The company plans to extract 2.5 million acre-feet of the water, a public good, over the next 50 years and sell it back to the public at a profit.

This project raises several concerns, some of which are directly related to the project while others point to the need for a public debate and discussion about California’s groundwater laws.

Here are some facts about the project: Cadiz is proposing to

extract on average 50,000 acre-feet of groundwater from the basin each year for 50 years. The intended rate of extraction of groundwater is significantly greater than the estimated natural recharge rate (the speed that groundwater is refilled naturally by rain and snow) of 5,000-32,000 acre-feet a year, which will lead to unsustainable mining of groundwater during the life of the project. The groundwater will go into a 43-mile-long pipeline to transport it to the Colorado River Aqueduct, where it will be distributed to several water utilities in Southern California.

John Bredehoeft, formerly with the U.S. Geological Survey, formed the Hydrodynamics Group, a Sausalito consulting firm. Newsha Ajami, a hydrologist specializing in sustainable water resource management, is a senior research associate at the Pacific Institute in Oakland.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Small businesses need help with ADA abuse

By Beth Gaines

In the Sacramento region, the original Squeeze Inn is the poster child of lawsuit abuse. A woman sued the famous burger joint for allegedly violating disability law even though she had no intention of ever doing business with them; she was merely a front for a predatory attorney looking for an easy mark.

Only wide-spread media attention and outrage spared the Squeeze Inn’s owner from going out of business. Others are not

so fortunate.



Beth Gaines

The source of these shameful shakedowns is the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and its California counterpart law. Intended to end discrimination against people with disabilities and to integrate them into mainstream life, the act has improved the quality of life for countless Americans and I am inspired to see people with disabilities enjoy activities and attractions available to them as a result of these laws.

But for business owners, the ADA story is not so inspiring. Right now, lawyers drive by small businesses and look for the most trivial violations of disability law, such as having a railing height being off by a centimeter or parking lot striping not being the right shade of a particular color.

After noting these violations, the lawyers then send threatening letters to the businesses, demanding that they fix the violations and settle with them, usually for a few thousand dollars. If the owners refuse, the lawyers sue them in court for “damages” that would cost businesses even more money.

This ugly practice bears no resemblance to the noble intent of ADA law. It is a racket, and it needs to be shut down. That is why I have introduced two bills to restore some balance to ADA proceedings, protecting the rights of the disabled while helping business owners provide reasonable access to everyone.

The first reform, Assembly Bill 1878, would give California's most vulnerable small businesses an opportunity to correct a disability violation before a lawsuit can be filed. Under this bill, once a business has received a written notice of violation, it would have 120 days to come into compliance. This common sense change would redirect the law away from lining lawyers' pockets and back toward better access.

My second measure, Assembly Bill 1879, would require the state architect to compile a list of all federal and state disability access regulations, as well as identify any conflicts in those regulations. This would be a boon for businesses that want to adhere perfectly to the law but are overwhelmed with the conflicts and complexities of the state and federal systems.

Shortly after I introduced these measures, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., sent a letter to Darrell Steinberg, the state Senate president pro tem, encouraging him to advance legislation that will end these indefensible ADA lawsuits, and I am hopeful that Steinberg and our legislative colleagues will work with me to restore the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act. These reforms are too important to be sacrificed to partisan politics.

We can do better than having lawyers continuously carpet bomb businesses with frivolous disability lawsuits. California should strike the right balance between ensuring real justice for real victims and giving businesses an opportunity to correct violations without being at the mercy of greedy lawyers.

My reforms strike that balance. It is way past time to put an end to the livelihoods of lawyers who have exploited landmark legislation and have caused so many mom-and-pop businesses unjustified grief.

Beth Gaines represents the 4th Assembly District, which

includes portions of Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Alpine counties.

Opinion: Barton saves author's life

To the community,

A huge shout-out of thanks to the people of Barton Hospital.

In my line of work I occasionally get to save the life of a fictional character. Always a good thing, but no big deal. Last week I witnessed how it's done in the real world. I was interested because the life they were trying to save was mine.

Here's how it went down.



Todd Borg

April 6 – Shortly after breakfast I felt a sudden sore throat coming on. By mid-afternoon, my throat was in lockdown. No food and no water would move past the gates except under extreme duress. I wasn't happy about it, but I'd had severe sore throats several times over the decades. I knew it just took time.

April 7 – Tried the usual, hot tea, lots of sleep time, all

without effect.

April 8 – Woke up to discover that the right side of my neck was swollen like the Pillsbury Doughboy. Left side still looked normal. I realized this wasn't just another severe sore throat. What were my options? Go to the ER, or try to make some poor doctor abandon holiday plans, neither very attractive. I'm loathe to make a fuss if it can possibly wait until normal hours. I decided I'd go in first thing in the morning.

April 9th – Visited Tahoe Urgent Care where Dr. Henning Mehrens took one look at me and said I had to immediately visit an ear, nose, and throat specialist. He got on the phone and found that Dr. Ronald Roth would see me an hour later.

I went down the street to Dr. Roth's office. He took one look at me and said that he was going to admit me to the hospital and put me on antibiotic IV, and after several hours on the IV, they would do a CAT scan and additional chest X-rays, and when he found what he knew he'd find – a deep-neck abscess – he'd do surgery in the morning.

"I, uh …," I fumbled in shock. "Let me talk this over with my wife and …."

"No," he said. "You don't have time to talk this over. You have to go now."

Dr. Roth gave me one of those looks that, while pleasant, are designed to communicate that some parts of life allow for chat and discussion, maybe over a glass of wine. But in other parts of life, there are black-and-white decisions based on hard science, no room for emotion. A deadly enemy had taken up a commanding position in my neck and my survival required application of a number of measures, time-sensitive, focused, and coordinated.

The rest of that day is a blur of pain and misery. Add to the

pain a dehydration level I'd never experienced, and I was ready to be done with this life. They wheeled me around the hospital getting the various scans, which revealed what Dr. Roth expected. I had a large abscess just outside of the windpipe.

By the time they brought me into the OR, my mental perceptions were gone. I was a blob of protoplasm with a rapid, shallow heartbeat, nothing more.

An hour later, I was awake in recovery, my major pain hugely reduced, a result almost too astonishing to believe.

Over the following hours, I learned that Dr. Roth had gone in through my mouth, tunneled down and sucked the guts out of the abscess, an impressive feat by any measure. (Later research has taught me about the odds of surviving deep-neck abscesses. Not very good unless you get the exact right treatment. Even with the correct treatment, one's chances remain unsure.)

As I've thought back on my time at Barton, I've revisited all of the different components necessary to make a hospital work so smoothly. Nurses and nurses' assistants and countless other support staff, all putting together a seamless whole. It is a hugely complicated network, all of these interrelated health professionals.

My only previous surgery was at a big-name, big-city hospital in a city with a world-famous medical university. How does Barton compare? More professional in every way. Much more focused on basic quality care. Less self-important. At every step I felt that Barton's doctors and nurses simply wanted to give me the best care they could. Dealing with the big-city hospital was like trying to communicate with a giant robot. But real medicine takes place between two individuals, a sick patient and a caregiver who is genuinely focused on the patient. Barton beats the big-city hospital hands down.

I come away with many snapshots: Dr. Roth and his frank

assessment of what was needed to survive a life-threatening disease, followed by his laser-accurate ability to orchestrate a search-and-destroy mission in the mysterious caverns of a person’s neck. Dr. Mehrens coming in morning and night to check on me and answer questions. Kinder, warmer docs they don’t make. The large nursing staff that doted on me. Yes, my health threat had an “impeded airway” issue to it, which made them pay extra attention. But that wasn’t what made them all feel like friends after a first visit. The CAT scan and X-ray staff, the OR specialists. These are the people behind the scenes. Yet each one of them treated me as warmly as the front-line nurses.

So, Barton Hospital staff, here is a love letter to all of you. I am deeply grateful and indebted to you. I will never forget your help, your attentions, your caring.

Oh, yeah, you also saved my life. No small thing, that.

Todd Borg, Meyers

P.S. If you, dear reader, know people who work at Barton, please consider forwarding this to them. I have no way to contact all of the Barton staff, and I wish to thank them all.