Opinion: With patience Obama's energy policy will work

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the March 23, 2012, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

It's as predictable as the spring winds over the Sierra: Every couple of years, gas prices climb inexorably in the days before the summer driving season and the hand-wringing begins.

Just as predictably, the blame for the pain felt by drivers is laid at the doorstep of the White House.

Regardless of party, every president is blamed for the higher gas prices, though none is praised when those prices go down again, as they always do (though never quite as far down as the last time around).

It's been that way since the first gas shortages hit the East Coast during the administration of President Richard Nixon nearly 40 years ago, and it was said that full tankers were waiting off the coast for prices to rise before they would offload their cargoes.

So, it's no surprise that President Barack Obama is the latest to feel the political pressure.

Facing a difficult re-election campaign, the president came to Nevada to tout his "all of the above" energy policy, which is boosting the state's economy by supporting its growing "green" energy industry. And, predictably, he was criticized for it.

It should go without saying that the president's premise is the right one.

Read the whole story

Opinion: LTVA needs to change how it does business

Open letter to the LTVA,

Even though we have verbally contacted the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority before on this matter, we are getting quite disturbed about public dollars going to private companies and costing local businesses additional expenses in promoting their business. Years ago, LTVA made a huge blunder by expending hundreds of thousands of dollars in Internet advertising to promote the privately run ad agency website called virtualtahoe.com. This website was subsequently sold by said agency at a substantial profit to a private investor who has been milking the LTVA name and reputation for years. This company has been charging local lodging providers to appear on that website by stealing traffic from the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

If you Google LTVA or Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, you will find sometimes in first position, the virtualtahoe.com link with verbiage indicating Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority LTVA information exploiting what should be a copyrighted trademark. Any CEO or board of directors worth their salt would have had this title infringement removed faster than a New York minute, but after all, LTVA is just another mini-government agency taking tax dollars collected by local lodging providers and delegating their promotional duties to high-priced and ineffective ad agencies.

Jim Morris, president Lake Tahoe Accommodations

Voices: Tough times means hard choices for Placer County school board

By Dave Delgardo, Sacramento Bee

When the only choices available are lousy ones, chances are, the final decision rendered will be bad. Trustees of a Placer County school district are faced with decisions to reduce offerings in music, increase significantly the number of students in classrooms, nearly eliminate paraprofessional instructional assistants, discontinue the department that purchases and distributes textbooks and materials, and reduce by 20 to 25 percent the number of educators supporting staff from the district office. This after shuttering a school three years ago.

All bad choices. But lately, there are no good choices to be had.

The school district has a long history with tremendous frugality of budget. The operating tenet always was “Take care of the kids and take care of the people who take care of the kids.” Historically, more dollars were spent in classrooms — closest to the kids — than in nearly any district in the state of California. The ratio of administrators to staff was among the lowest.

Yet it was not the case that the teachers were close to the highest paid in the area. Quite the opposite. Money was channeled toward small classes, paraprofessional support, robust teacher training, up-to-date curriculum and supplies, tremendous libraries and computer labs, and very well

maintained facilities.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Heavenly gives back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to Heavenly staff for once again adopting a Day of Nourishment.

Volunteers from the Heavenly team spent their time on Monday helping Bread & Broth volunteers serve people a hot meal on a cold night. They served a well balanced, healthy meal to all who came in hungry. All of our co-coordinators that Monday were delighted that Heavenly continues to help out our Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment through the Bread & Broth program.

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe in large part because of the generosity of the local community. A $250 sponsorship covers the cost of food and beverages for the approximately 100 people who visit each Monday evening.

To find out how your family or business can Adopt A Day of Nourishment, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

Bread & Broth

Opinion: Firefighters appreciative of community's support

To the community,

The annual Lake Valley Firefighters' Ball is always gauged by the commitment and generosity of our community. This year was no different.

The 50th annual Lake Valley Firefighters' Ball is the Lake Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association's single fund-raising event of the year and this year was a great success.

This would not be possible without the support of this wonderful community by both the attendance and donations. We would like to thank all the individuals and businesses that donated and helped make this happen. Your support and generosity is overwhelming.

We would also like to take a moment to thank our grand prize donors. Thank you to Kirkwood, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Sierra Athletic Club, Pamela Francis – Century 21 at Tahoe Paradise, and general contractor Ray A. Fernsten for your very generous donations.

We look forward to our 51st annual Ball next year and hope to see you there.

"We come to your fire, you come to our ball."

Thanks again,

Lake Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association

Opinion: Tips to make last run of the day not be trip to the ER

By Warren Withers

Wintertime in Tahoe means skiing and snowboarding for visitors and locals. Few other places in the world have the abundance of snowsports opportunities that we enjoy in the Tahoe basin. With all the excitement and fun, many of us tend to sometimes forget a few simple safety measures that can help prevent the occasional, but largely avoidable injuries that can dampen our day.

Consider the following when you're headed out to your favorite resort, so your après ski plans do not include a trip to the emergency department:

1) Wear a helmet. It is interesting to see the evolution of the use of the helmet in snowsports. It is such a simple device, but still used and thought of perhaps similarly to seatbelts in 1965: interesting, but optional. Like a seat belt, it does not protect against all forms of injury, but may change the degree of injury you endure if you do hit your head. A moderate head injury without a helmet may lead to a minor head injury if you're wearing one, and so on. Remember, once you start wearing a helmet, you will never go back. They're comfortable and keep you warm. Just like your seatbelt, you will begin to feel naked and unprotected without

it.

2) Wrist guards. These simple and inexpensive devices can be purchased at any sports shop, and like the helmet they can make the difference between a normal fall and a trip to the emergency room. Wrist guards are especially useful for snowboarders who are just learning to ride.

3) Resort boundaries and backcountry access gates. This subject, too, has evolved considerably in recent years. Today, there are designated gates that you can go through at some resorts and access the "backcountry" or un-roomed terrain. This can be an amazing experience, but it is clearly an activity left to experts who know fully the risk involved. When you cross these gates it's imperative that you know you are entering unpatrolled areas and if you are injured or become lost, rescues take longer than hoped for and are quite expensive.

4) Resort boundaries, no go areas. Resort staff members are experts at identifying when an area is safe and when it is not. When they mark an area off, usually with a rope or ribbon, it is for your safety, not because the skiing or snowboarding is so great there that they want to keep you away from it. This is a simple concept, but we see these boundaries ignored, often to the regret of those who do so.

5) Avalanches. This subject gets a lot of media attention when it happens and for good reason. If you intend to venture into the backcountry, you must first know what you are doing. Taking an avalanche course and wearing and knowing how to use a beacon is a must. These will reduce, but not eliminate your risk of injury. Avalanches inside resort boundaries are very unlikely, but just beyond that boundary line, the slopes of "steep and deep" snow call out to the powder hounds in all of us. Again, see No. 4 above for boundaries.

Keeping these safety measures in mind can help you have

enjoyable and safe spring on the slopes!

Warren Withers is medical director of Emergency Services at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Opinion: Caltrans listens to residents regarding speed limits

To the community,

I just finished my meeting with Jody Jones and Andrew Brandt from Caltrans. Apparently our concerns were heard because Caltrans is modifying its recommendation regarding speed limits.

In Meyers, from Hopi to right above Arapahoe the speed limit will remain the same 40 miles per hour. The entrance to Meyers to Hopi is being classified as a transition zone from the 55 miles per hour as you come down from the summit to the 40 miles per hour beginning at Hopi. For this four-tenths of a mile, the speed will increase from 40 to 45 then it goes back down to the 40.



Norma Santiago

A little beyond Arapahoe where the speed limit is currently 50 it will increase to 55 until you get into the city where it will transition to 45 then to 40 until before you get to Stateline where it will remain 35.

In its evaluation, Caltrans does take into account those optional considerations noted in the federal law; however, combined with the other considerations the most they can reduce the speed limit is 5 miles per hour. So unless something dramatically changes in driver behavior or geometrically along the highway, these are the speed limits.

However, understand that by 2014, given the road projects that Caltrans has planned, the study will be repeated and the speed limit will be adjusted accordingly. Included in those plans are a class 2 bike trail on Highway 50 through Meyers; a pedestrian crosswalk across Highway 50 that is going to be sited between Apache and the bug station; a pedestrian button at Pioneer Trail and Highway 50.

While I know this isn’t all we wanted, however, most important, we were successful in convincing Caltrans to keep the Meyers commercial core at 40. As we move through the implementation of the Meyers Community Plan, we will continue to arm ourselves with the community design that further merits additional decreases in speed.

I want to thank all of you for your ongoing support throughout this process. I will continue to pursue changes in legislation that reflect further considerations, for example when the law

refers to environmental considerations, it speaks to what is actually on the road in terms of buildings, storefronts, etc. There is no consideration given to how higher speeds effect air quality.

Additionally, I would like to see Caltrans adopt the USLIMITS methodology for setting speed limits which affords greater flexibility. Unfortunately, all this has to go through the legislative process which takes time, but I am hopeful for the change.

The new signs should be up in mid-April.

Again, thank you everyone for your support.

Norma Santiago, El Dorado County supervisor

Opinion: Reforms needed to reverse California decline

By Michael J. Boskin and John F. Cogan, Wall Street Journal

Long a harbinger of national trends and an incubator of innovation, cash-strapped California eagerly awaits a temporary revenue surge from Facebook IPO stock options and capital gains. Meanwhile, Stockton may soon become the state's largest city to go bust. Call it the agony and ecstasy of contemporary California.

California's rising standards of living and outstanding public schools and universities once attracted millions seeking upward economic mobility. But then something went radically wrong as California legislatures and governors built a welfare state on high tax rates, liberal entitlement benefits, and

excessive regulation. The results, though predictable, are nonetheless striking. From the mid-1980s to 2005, California's population grew by 10 million, while Medicaid recipients soared by seven million; tax filers paying income taxes rose by just 150,000; and the prison population swelled by 115,000.

California's economy, which used to outperform the rest of the country, now substantially underperforms. The unemployment rate, at 10.9%, is higher than every other state except Nevada and Rhode Island. With 12% of America's population, California has one third of the nation's welfare recipients.

Partly due to generous union wages and benefits, inflexible work rules and lobbying for more spending, many state programs and institutions spend too much and achieve too little. For example, annual spending on each California prison inmate is equal to an entire middle-income family's after-tax income. Many of California's K-12 public schools rank poorly on standardized tests. The unfunded pension and retiree health-care liabilities of workers in the state-run Calpers system, which includes teachers and university personnel, totals around $250 billion.

Read the whole story

Opinion: S. Lake Tahoe – nothing but a name on a map

To the community,

On the question of consolidating the fire department with Lake Valley, the most important consideration is who will be the sovereign? The city was created to give the citizens of the

city sovereignty within the limits of the city. Thus, there would be self-government within a general law city. It is clear that if the Lake Valley Fire Department absorbs the city's fire department with its board determining the policies of the district, the city's sovereignty will be diminished. There will be a loss of self-government. Is that a wise thing to do if the city wishes to remain a city? Is it self-destruction? If an agreement is reached to consolidate and then we get more of the same, self-government will be a lost cause.



Bill Crawford

Presently, it is a question as to whether or not there is a city of South Lake Tahoe because in many ways it is not a city. Examples: The largest source of city revenue is grant money. After 40 some years the city does not have a city hall. There is no heart, no central location. No home. So where is the city of South Lake Tahoe? In my view the community is a place name on a map. As a city it never matured. And the visitors authority summed it up in its attempt at marketing with what they say is a brand, Tahoe South. Yes, we are on the map and that's about all there is to it.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Important to know about dangers of poison

By Eric Guevin

We Participate in National Poison Prevention Week so we can celebrate the lives saved by prevention. In just the past year, America's 57 poison control centers fielded 4 million calls, treating 2.4 million human poison exposures and handling 1.6 million information calls.

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District hopes to bring people together in commemoration of National Poison Prevention Week, to ultimately mitigate the number of people who are involved in poisonings each year, especially poisonings in the home – the most commonly reported poisonings.

By educating local residents about preventative steps in the home and in their lives, I believe we can make serious progress in keeping our loved ones safe. It is vital that people arm themselves with basic information on poison prevention in the home, such as keeping chemicals out of the reach of children and carefully reading the labels and dosages on all products.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, approximately 90 percent of poisonings happen at home, and 51 percent of poisonings involve children under the age of 6. The majority of fatal poisonings occur among adults, especially older adults.

National Poison Prevention Week was established by the U.S. Congress in 1961 to focus national attention on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. To learn more about ways to keep people of all ages safe and help prevent poisonings,

visit the Poison Help website.

In case of a poison emergency, contact your local poison center at 800.222.1222.

Eric Guevin is Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District fire marshal.