Opinion: Running mates could shake up presidential race

By Robert Reich

My political prediction for 2012 (based on absolutely no inside information): Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden swap places. Biden becomes Secretary of State – a position he's apparently coveted for years. And Hillary Clinton, Vice President.

So the Democratic ticket for 2012 is Obama-Clinton.

Why do I say this? Because Obama needs to stir the passions and enthusiasms of a Democratic base that's been disillusioned with his cave-ins to regressive Republicans. Hillary Clinton on the ticket can do that.

Moreover, the economy won't be in superb shape in the months leading up to Election Day. Indeed, if the European debt crisis grows worse and if China's economy continues to slow, there's a better than even chance we'll be back in a recession. Clinton would help deflect attention from the bad economy and put it on foreign policy, where she and Obama have shined.

The deal would also make Clinton the obvious Democratic presidential candidate in 2016 – offering the Democrats a shot at twelve (or more) years in the White House, something the Republicans had with Ronald Reagan and the first George Bush but which the Democrats haven't had since FDR. Twelve years gives the party in power a chance to reshape the Supreme Court as well as put an indelible stamp on America.

According to the latest Gallup poll, the duo are this year's most admired man and woman This marks the fourth consecutive win for Obama while Clinton has been the most admired woman in

each of the last 10 years. She'a topped the list 16 times since 1993, exceeding the record held by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who topped the list 13 times.

Obama-Clinton in 2012. It's a natural.

Robert Reich is chancellor's professor of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of Labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written 13 books.

Opinion: Preschool prepares kids for the classroom

By Vicki Barber

Debates continue about whether or not preschool is important for children. For some of us, it's not a debate; we know it works for children. Two states in the nation, Georgia and Oklahoma, have mandated preschool programs and have consistently shown that preschool gives children a jump start in their learning. California has not yet decided preschool is a major player in education, but El Dorado County knows it is important.

So what's so special about preschool that can't be accomplished at home? Most activities of preschool can be accomplished at home with a dedicated mom or dad who is willing to spend time talking, playing, showing, teaching, and demonstrating how the world works. Preparing to read requires a great deal of language development, including such

activities as stories, nature walks, and playtime. Some families are geared toward providing just this kind of support for their little ones. However, there are many more families who may not be in a position to provide the structured support that creates a strong learning environment for their voracious learners.



Vicki Barber

High quality preschool does provide the support and opportunities a child needs to develop the language skills necessary for reading and counting. It provides for nature walks and interactive play with others. Here's what I mean: A child comes to preschool knowing the word "fish." A family might use the word "fishy" for anything in the water. It's easy and logical and fun, so fishy it is. Guppies are fish, tadpoles are fish, crawdads are fish, sharks are fish, and so on. Inadvertently, in our desire to keep things simple for a child's understanding, we often do not use the language that truly describes the thing that is in the water.

A child doesn't know all those other names for fish unless we use the words. Preschool uses the words. "Here's the guppy. See the crawdad. There's a picture of a shark. It's much larger than the guppy."

Now the child is getting more words and a much broader picture of "fish." The wonderful news about this oral language development is that it directly translates into reading. When the child who has these experiences learns to read the word guppy, he or she now has a picture in mind of what a guppy

looks like. The same thing happens with a crawdad or a shark. Without these language connections, the child only knows "fish."

Reading becomes a problem when he sounds out the word gu-pp-y only to be left with a blank space in his mind because there is nothing, no picture with which he can connect the word.

Language development in these early years is a major key to reading. Families and preschools can support this development every day simply by asking the question, "What's in my world that my children and I can talk about today?"

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

Opinion: Explaining why Washoe Meadows State Park is being reheard

To the community,

Since the October meeting of California State Parks and Recreation Commission where the decision was unanimous to accept staff's recommendations., the director of State Parks, Ruth Coleman, approved the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration project. The approved project is the proposed Preferred Alternative described in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR): River Ecosystem Restoration with Reconfigured 18-hole Regulation Golf Course (Alternative 2 Slightly Modified). On Nov. 23, 2011, a lawsuit that

objected to the procedure used to process the approvals for the proposed project was filed on the project.

The Parks and Recreation Commission will take the opportunity to reconsider the approved project at its January meeting. In light of the lawsuit, the commission wished to ensure that they have a process in place that will stand the test of a legal challenge in order to not delay what is the clear and proper choice for improving the environment of the park area and the lake. This is too important to the future of this area to not ensure it can proceed in a timely fashion.

All comments, letters, transcripts, and presentations from the October 2011 hearing will be incorporated and included by reference in this reconsideration. Although there is no need to re-present materials the commissioners already have received, the public is invited to attend the meeting and offer testimony if they so desire. A revised notice of determination (NOD) will be filed. The commission meeting will be at the next regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 27, 2012, at 9am in the Community Room of the Brentwood Community Center, 35 Oak St., Brentwood.

Under statute, an agenda item must be heard within a radius of 100 miles of either Sacramento, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Bernardino, Eureka, Redding, Fresno, Ukiah, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, or Santa Barbara, whichever is closest to the project. In this case, since the project is in South Lake Tahoe, that city would be Sacramento, and Brentwood meets that requirement for the meeting location.

Cyndie Walck, California State Parks

Opinion: Dim government thinking creates silly law

By Ted Gaines

As we say hello to 2012, it is time to say goodbye to an old friend, the trusty and dependable 100-watt light bulb. It will disappear into the new, uncomfortably-bright white world of the compact fluorescent light (CFL), where green Utopianism is killing consumer choice, shipping jobs to China, and lowering the dimmer switch on freedom.

The government's benevolent, freedom-loving message to the people regarding CFLs is this: You can use any bulb you like, as long as it's fluorescent. That's because CFLs are the chief replacement for the traditional incandescent light bulbs that the federal government will effectively ban in stages starting Jan. 1, 2012.



Ted Gaines

The problem with that Hobson's choice is that people already have real choices when it comes to bulbs for their homes and they don't need the wisdom of bureaucrats to light the way for them.

Many are getting by with the same inefficient, global-warming villain known as the incandescent bulb that has only survived more than a century without significant change. Among things it does that CFLs do not do is glow with a light people

actually enjoy and does not give them headaches. Who would want that when the government says otherwise?

It also doesn't spill Mercury – a poison – onto the linoleum when it breaks, requiring a scary list of EPA clean-up instructions that include emptying the room of people and pets, airing out the room for 10 minutes and turning off any central heating and air systems. And it's cheap.

The CFL has its advantages over the traditional bulb. Energy efficiency is the CFL's calling card. It uses a fraction of the incandescent's energy. It lasts longer.

The government, though, isn't weighing the benefits of one against the other, like consumers in a free society do day after day with product after product from candy bars to cars. No – it has made up consumers' minds for them and put the fear of global warming above everything else.

What do consumers want? When standing in the light bulb aisle, with the bulbs sitting right next to each other on the shelves, they ignore the dictates of the green *bien* pensants and overwhelmingly choose incandescent bulbs.

Apparently, they are suffering from a collective delusion about what product is better.

The ban has all the hallmarks of bad government. It's a nannyish, meddling, superior regulation that will force people to buy a product they don't want for more money.

The green jobs that were supposed to be one of the many blessings of the forced transition were not a myth, however. They appeared – in China. Apparently, labor-intensive CFL manufacturing doesn't pencil out in America.

As we say goodbye to the signature invention of American's greatest inventor, let's remember that we won't lose our freedom all at once, but one light bulb at a time.

Ted Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento and Sierra counties.

Opinion: Roots of Republican Party crack-up

By Robert Reich

With the Iowa caucuses just days away, the Republican crack-up threatens the future of the Grand Old Party more profoundly than at any other time since the GOP's eclipse in 1932. That's bad for America.

The crack-up isn't just Romney-the-smooth versus Gingrich-the-bomb-thrower. Not just House Speaker John Boehner, who keeps making agreements he can't keep, versus House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, who keeps making trouble he can't control. And not just the GOP establishment versus the Tea Partiers.

The underlying conflict lies deep in the nature and structure of the Republican Party. And its roots are very old.

As political analyst Michael Lind has noted, today's Tea Party is less an ideological movement than the latest incarnation of an angry white minority – predominantly Southern, mainly rural, largely male – that has repeatedly attacked American democracy in order to get its way.

It's no coincidence that the states responsible for putting the most Tea Party representatives in the House are all former members of the Confederacy. Others are from border states with

significant Southern populations and Southern ties.

This “no-compromise” right wing of today’s GOP isn’t much different from the evangelical social conservatives who began asserting themselves in the party during the 1990s, and, before them, the “Willie Horton” conservatives of the 1980s, and, before them, Richard Nixon’s “silent majority.”

Robert Reich Robert Reich, former U.S. secretary of labor, is professor of public policy at UC Berkeley and the author of “Aftershock: The Next Economy and America’s Future.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Are you prepared for a winter storm?

By Rebecca Wass

In the midst of the winter season many people who travel to and live in the Lake Tahoe area may forget about some common winter safety precautions, especially when it’s storming outside. According to National Weather Service, nearly 70 percent of injuries during winter storms result from vehicle accidents and about 25 percent of injuries result from being caught outside in a storm.



Some of the hazards associated with winter storms include:

• Slips and falls due to slippery walkways

• Driving accidents due to slippery roadways

• Carbon monoxide poisoning

• Hypothermia and frostbite due to the cold weather exposure

• Being struck by falling objects such as icicles, tree limbs and utility poles

• Electrocution due to downed power lines or objects in contact with power lines

• Falls from heights, such as falls from roof or skylights while removing snow

• Roof collapse under weight of snow (or melting snow if drains are clogged)

• Burns from fires caused by energized line contact or equipment failure

• Dehydration

• Back injuries or heart attack while removing snow

“We see a lot of slips and falls with the older generation,” said Cynthia Burkart, registered nurse and Barton’s director of Occupational Health. “It’s important for people to walk slower when there is ice and snow about and pick up their feet, take short steps, be cautious, make sure to have good soles on their shoes and “do not” wear high heels.”

Winter walking tips:

• A pair of well insulated boots with good rubber treads is a must for walking during or after a winter storm. Keeping a pair of rubber over-shoes with good treads which fit over your street shoes is a good idea during the winter months.

• When walking on a sidewalk which has not been cleared and you must walk in the street, walk against the traffic and as close to the curb as you can.

• Be on the lookout for vehicles that may have lost traction and are slipping toward you.

• Be aware that approaching vehicles may not be able to stop at crosswalks or traffic signals.

• During the daytime, wear sunglasses to help you see better and avoid hazards.

Burkart also suggests that if people do decide to walk in the snow, to be sure and walk toward traffic and wear bright clothing.

“We have found that many people come in with broken wrists, or fall forward and hit their heads,” she said.

When it comes to driving in the winter she says, “If you don’t have to go out, why put yourself and others at risk?

“But if you do decide to drive, be sure to have an emergency kit in your car,” Burkart said. “Have your vehicle inspected to ensure the following all of your brakes, fluids, electrical, battery, tire tread, lights, windshield wipers and defroster are all working properly.”

Besides carrying tire chains, also carry an emergency kit in your vehicle:

• Blankets/sleeping bags and extra winter clothes

• Cellular telephone or two-way radio

• Shovel

• Windshield scraper and snow brush

• Traction aids (bag of sand or cat litter)

• Flashlight with fresh/extra batteries

• Matches

• Emergency flares and jumper cables

• Snacks and water

• Road maps

If a storm strands you in your vehicle, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, staying in your vehicle when stranded is often the safest choice if winter storms create poor visibility or if roadways are ice covered. These steps will increase your safety when stranded:

• Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna as a signal to rescuers and raise the hood of the car (if it is not snowing)

• Wrap your entire body, including your head, in extra clothing, blankets, or newspapers

• Stay awake. You will be less vulnerable to cold-related health problems

• Run the motor (and heater) for about 10 minutes per hour, opening one window slightly to let in air. Make sure that snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe—this will reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning

• Keep moving to improve your circulation and stay warm

• Do not eat snow, it will lower your body temperature

• Huddle with other people for warmth

• Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a vehicle can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse. Be aware of symptoms of dehydration

Rebecca Wass is the communications specialist for Barton

Health.

Opinion: S. Tahoe officials will do anything to make a buck

To the community,

Recently, our town surrendered to be colonized by SnowGlobe. For miles the heavy bombardment pounded and pounded away. Hearing aids had to be turned off and coyotes howling couldn’t be heard. That’s a shame.

City management gave the keys to the city and was happy to do so because the invaders ironically had promised to pay tribute to the city so that for three days they could raise hell. The site of the battle of the booms and blasts was the local college’s soccer field. The college president was happy to provide the site for the school’s share of tribute.

Bill Crawford

The SnowGlobe drew a big crowd, battles always do. In this case the spectators had to pay through the nose for the privilege of going deaf and to wear weird headgear. Of course, such apparel, a trophy that proves one was there, is costly. But all of the heavy tariff was bearable because it was a no

cop free zone. The payees could get stoned without fear of a hassle.

It’s rumored that city management left town for the duration of the booms and blasts so they could escape the cries of the victims, prisoners living within hearing distance of the insane noise.

So the town is a colony of anyone with tribute to pay the city, and can for a time turn the place into a noisy wasteland. So much for law and order that can be suspended to create, for money, lawless disorder.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

PS: I wonder how the hospital ill faired under the circumstances.

Opinion: Watch out for scams involving foreclosed houses

To the community,

We have encountered a new scam up here, at least new to us, that is probably a byproduct of the foreclosure crises.

Here is how it goes: bad guy/gal(s) find unoccupied home that is in foreclosure. They list the home for rent on a place like Craig’s List. If they need to show the home, they break in and boldly do so, sometimes removing notices and real estate signs to obscure that the property is in distress or under the control of another entity. They accept money for

first/last/deposit, etc., and then disappear.

The poor wound-be tenant later finds out that his lease/tenancy is a farce.

Thanks to some nice work by El Dorado County sheriff's deputies, we have all three suspects identified in the one we just saw up here, which cost our victim more than $4,000, as to which we will of course seek a restitution order.

This one might be harder than some to detect/defeat. Probably be best to be suspicious of any claimed property manager who does not have an established office, business cards, etc.

A call to California Department of Real Estate or a check with their Internet site can verify whether the person has a license, assuming you really have their true name. If dealing with a claimed owner unfamiliar to the prospective tenant, probably no harm in writing down license plates, asking for ID and verifying ownership with county records.

Back when not too many homes foreclosed and those that did tended to move fairly quickly to new occupants, this probably would not have been nearly as easy to pull off as it apparently is now. Now, with some foreclosed homes sitting empty for months at a time, combined with an over-heated rental market (in part caused by persons dispossessed from their homes), there appears to be a window of opportunity for these crooks.

Hans Uthe, El Dorado County assistant district attorney

Opinion: Stop using 911 for noise issues and realize this is a tourist town

The noise is not going away. Day 2 of SnowGlobe is under way. But concert promoters and South Lake Tahoe officials are taking steps to deal with people's concerns.

The number to call to complain about noise involving SnowGlobe (or any loud event) is (530) 542.6100. Calling 911 for noise issues could endanger the life of someone not able to receive timely care because people were tying up 911 for a non-emergency. People – get a grip – noise can be a nuisance, but it's not an emergency. Be responsible.



SnowGlobe officials are working on noise issues. Photo/LTN

Friday between 9:15-11pm the bass levels from the headliner BassNectar are expected be the loudest of the festival. After all, "bass" is in the name.

"While the overall sound levels have been reduced, the bass levels will continue to cause some vibrations. The producers have agreed to end Saturday evening's concert earlier than scheduled and will be concluding the events at 12:30am (New

Year’s Day),” said Nancy Kerry, spokeswoman for the city. (South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O’Rourke is out of town.)

SnowGlobe Music Festival producers have repositioned some of the equipment and are offering those with noise sensitivities to go to Murphy’s Irish Pub on Emerald Bay Road between 9-11pm Friday for drinks and appetizers on behalf of the SnowGlobe team. Just mention SnowGlobe sent you.

City officials report other festival operations have been successful, shuttles and parking operations are running smoothly and many businesses are reporting retail sales above expectations.

Remember, this is not the only event on the South Shore that produces noise. It just so happens the Al Tahoe neighborhood is experiencing unwanted noise presumably for the first time. Plenty of residents have learned to put the greater good of the South Shore tourism economy before themselves by putting up with noise from Harveys outdoor concerts, Street Vibrations, five days of constant airplanes during the celebrity golf tournament, and other events.

Maybe it’s time you decide if you want to live in a tourist town. We all depend on them. Now get out there and make some money off these people.

Noise happens.

– Kathryn Reed, Lake Tahoe News publisher

Opinion: Time to control marijuana odor in South Tahoe

By Steve Kubby

A citywide voter initiative to control marijuana odor and set rules for cultivation was filed Dec. 29 with the city clerk. The city attorney has 15 days to issue a Title and Summary so the signature gathering process can begin.

The new initiative requires 856 valid voter signatures to qualify for the Nov. 6 ballot.



Steve Kubby

When people come to South Lake Tahoe, they expect to smell pine trees and fresh air. Odor from marijuana cultivation has a negative effect on visitors' experience and on property values, which should not be tolerated in a residential setting. Responsible marijuana growers control their odor emissions out of respect for their neighbors and out of the need for security from home invasions. This initiative will make the abatement of marijuana odor an enforcement priority.

Unfortunately, frustrated and frightened patients who are trying to comply with the current South Lake Tahoe Cultivation Ordinance are finding that it is impossible to get their

landlords to sign notarized letters giving permission for them to grow – even though they already know and allow their tenants to do so. Apparently, landlords are reluctant to sign something that would incriminate them for violating federal law and the Controlled Substance Act.

Patients must also register in public records that they are growing, a clear violation of their Fifth Amendment rights. Too bad if the city decides you are not in compliance, their ordinance allows them to publish patient's name and fine them $1,000 per day. As a result, few patients have registered and now live in terrible fear that the city will raid them, cut off their power and turn their lives upside down.

The current cultivation ordinance punishes bona fide patients by creating expensive and difficult barriers to rights already granted to them by the voters of California. In contrast, the city rewards illegal growers, because nearly anyone can qualify, provided they have enough money and time to jump through all the hoops, give their landlords money under the table, and get a medical recommendation for the right price.

Under the current system that was adopted, illegal growers and out-of-towners will be flocking to the city of South Lake Tahoe by the thousands, something none of us wants.

It is not the job of the City Council to serve as property managers. That is the legal responsibility of property owners and rental property managers. It is their responsibility to clearly spell out the terms of their lease, to screen their potential tenants and perform whatever inspections are required to maintain their property. Absentee owners should take responsibility and hire a local property manager. If tenants are in violation of their lease, then owners and managers have ample legal remedies ranging from eviction to civil and even criminal actions in court.

It is also not the job of the City Council to thwart state law

and the will of the voters. Medical marijuana patients have legal rights. This voter initiative will ensure that the rights and privacy of patients is respected, while marijuana odor is brought under control and illegal growers are no longer protected by the City of South Lake Tahoe.

The South Lake Tahoe Marijuana Odor Control and Cultivation Ordinance

The People of the City of South Lake Tahoe, California, do enact as follows:

Section A. Purpose and Finding

The People of the City of South Lake Tahoe find that marijuana cultivation in homes can create a number of problems that need to be addressed. Number one among these issues is the odor of marijuana plants, which many people find offensive. At the same time, bona fide medical marijuana patients and caregivers find themselves facing a new city ordinance which creates difficult, expensive, illegal procedures and barriers to rights already granted to them by the People of California. As a result, many patients cannot comply and now live in fear, while the more pressing issue of marijuana odor goes ignored. This initiative is intended to make marijuana cultivation odor abatement the key issue, while leaving matters occurring within a dwelling up to owners, landlords, their lease agreements and existing real estate law.

Section B. Orders

(1) Odor from the cultivation of marijuana is hereby deemed a serious problem within our city and any complaint of odor issues should be investigated and acted upon.

(2) Any property or dwelling which is found to be emitting marijuana cultivation odors should be tagged on the front door or gate, with a notice that odor has been detected, and the city requests appropriate actions be taken within 72 hours to

remove or sufficiently suppress the odor, such as the purchase of a charcoal filter unit specifically designed to remove odors.

(3) Any property or dwelling which is found to be emitting marijuana cultivation odors 72 hours after being tagged can be fined up to $50 per day until the odor is removed. Odor from the smoking of marijuana shall not be cause for any action.

(4) Adults 21 years and older, who are bona fide medical marijuana patients, may produce up to 6 mature outdoor flowering plants, or up to 12 mature indoor flowering plants per person; or a total number of plants cultivated per household not to exceed 12 mature flowering plants outdoors or 24 plants indoors. The cultivation shall take place in an indoor or outdoor space or area not visible from a public street or sidewalk.

(5) No taxes, fees, laws, rules, regulations, zones, local city or county zoning requirements may be adopted or enacted to defeat, deny, or prohibit the purposes of this Act, or to defeat, deny, or prohibit adult medical marijuana patients, 21 or older or from engaging in the activities authorized and protected by this Act, unless passed by the state or local voters.

(6) Nothing in this section shall prevent a property owner from prohibiting marijuana cultivation on their property or conduct that damages their property, so long as that is clearly stated in their rental agreement or lease.

(7) This Act repeals, preempts and nullifies any and all conflicting local regulations, but allows for a greater number of plants than authorized by this measure, if a physician has written a letter or recommendation that states that these limits are insufficient for their patient.

(8) No regulations, taxes, permits or fees shall be enacted or imposed upon marijuana for qualifying patients or their

caregivers.

(9) Elected, appointed, hired employees, officers, and officials of the City of South Lake Tahoe shall not directly or indirectly cooperate with or assist federal, state, or county officers or officials, volunteers, or employees who eradicate marijuana, act for seizure or forfeiture, or demand entry without a warrant or to defeat any liberally construed purpose of this Act, nor may any state or local agency contract to eradicate marijuana that is being grown, manufactured or stored under the provisions of this Act. Violation of this clause shall be a misdemeanor, punishable by fine and up to one year in prison.

(10) The City of South Lake Tahoe is ordered to protect and defend all provisions of this Act from any and all challenges or litigation, whether by persons, officials, cities, counties, the state or federal governments.

(11) South Lake Tahoe City Police are hereby enjoined from arresting anyone age 21 or older for any marijuana related offense, which is protected by this Act.

(12) This Act shall become effective immediately upon passage and may be applied retroactively to protect patients or caregivers from civil or criminal prosecution.

(13) Patients and caregivers shall have the right to transfer their marijuana to other patients or collectives and be paid a remuneration for their out of pocket expense and their time.

(14) The City of South Lake Tahoe is hereby enjoined from banning or limiting the number of medical marijuana collectives, dispensaries or delivery services operating within the City. However, the City shall have the power to regulate or even ban any signage by dispensaries and to ban the location of any dispensary within 600 feet of a school.

Section C. Severability

If any of the provisions of this Act, or any part thereof, is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall not be affected, but shall remain in full force and effect, and to this end the provisions of this Act are severable.

Steve Kubby is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.