Opinion: Local elected officials need to listen to the middle class

Publisher's note: ***The following was a speech read by South Lake Tahoe resident Ernie Claudio at the Dec. 15 South Tahoe Public Utility District meeting.***

My name is Ernie Claudio and I am here today to give notice. There is something wrong in our nation. The middle class is dying. We are suffering, we are losing our jobs and we are losing our homes. I've been to seven Occupy protests collecting opinions from the middle class about "The Problem".

The problem is our elected officials, from top to bottom, including the elected officials in this room today.

We (the middle class) are losing money and that money is our buying power and it is this buying power that keeps this country going. So every penny that comes out of the pockets of the middle class is part of the hemorrhaging that is causing the death of the middle class. So if the water rates go up, then you (the board of directors) are part of the problem and I respectfully ask that you remove yourselves from office, because that's what's coming.

The elected officials were supposed to protect us, and they failed. The elected officials were supposed to protect our jobs and they failed. Now there is a nationwide outcry, ports were shut down on Monday. We are looking for politicians who can stop this hemorrhaging.

It's like a pendulum, it's gone as far as it can one direction and now its time to swing back. So the Occupy Movement, the middle class will do what it has to do to protect itself and most important, our children. I mean, how are our kids going

to be able to afford to buy a house if they can’t find a job.

And to make matters worse our country has dropped down a notch when it comes to respect and honor. This happened the day a congressman from South Carolina named Joe Wilson called our president a liar in an open meeting. Do I have that right? Can I call you a liar? Well, apparently so, because he got away with it and he was not punished for it.

So this brings us into a new era; a new era of politics where respect for public officials means nothing and to insult a public official is OK. Now am I going to do that now? No, but I am warning you that its coming. Because the Occupy Movement, the middle class will do what it has to do to protect itself.

So if these rates go up one penny, you will be putting yourself in the position where you are part of the problem. That’s why we would respectfully ask you to resign from office, if you cannot keep these rates frozen of even lower them.

Opinion: Shopping locally needs to be more than a 1-day event

By Rhonda Ahbrams, Reno Gazette-Journal

President Barack Obama did it. Republicans did it. I did it. So did 103 million other Americans. We shopped at independent stores on Small Business Nov. 26. We bought gifts in small stores, ate meals at small restaurants. Now, how do we keep customers coming back to small businesses throughout the

holiday season?

Small Business Saturday was the most successful “shop local” campaign I’ve seen in my 20 years of advocating for small companies. Yes, I know it’s a promotional campaign started by American Express, but let’s give credit where credit is due. Small Business Saturday significantly raised awareness of the importance of patronizing small businesses.

According to American Express, the sponsor of Small Business Saturday, about one-third of Americans shopped at an independent business on Nov. 26, and sales from Amex cardholders at those businesses increased 23 percent over last year’s Small Business Saturday. More than 2.7 million people “liked” the Small Business Saturday Facebook page; to put that in perspective, that’s more Facebook fans than NASCAR.

“Black Friday was the best day ever in my history, and Small Business Saturday was right up there,” said Pam Hammond, owner of the delightful gift shop, Paddington Station, in Ashland, Ore.

Ashland is always packed the Friday after Thanksgiving as the town hosts a holiday parade and caroling in the downtown plaza. But Hammond said Small Business Saturday kept the momentum going.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe News apologizes for website glitches

To *Lake Tahoe News* readers,

Tired of being unable to log-on to *Lake Tahoe News*? That was a rhetorical question. Your frustration is not likely to be greater than ours.

We apologize to everyone for all of the inconveniences in the last few weeks. In our efforts to speed up the site we then made it hit or miss with being able to log-on to the Home page. While other pages were always easily accessible, the Home page hasn't always been.

Having a growing business is a good thing, but when the pain of it is felt by our loyal readers, well, that's just not acceptable.

We could get into the minutia of detail about how all this IT stuff works, but it doesn't matter. What matters is that *Lake Tahoe News* is there – every page – when you want it. To achieve this, we are doing some heavy lifting this afternoon that will take several hours. If you don't see any new stories after this one for several hours – even well into Friday – don't be alarmed.

Thank you for your loyalty to *Lake Tahoe News*.

Kathryn Reed, LTN publisher

Opinion: Meyers says thanks for great tree lighting event

To the community,

The Meyers Business Group would like to thank the individuals

and businesses that made our inaugural Meyers Tree Lighting event on Dec. 9 such a success. More than 350 people showed up to ring in the holidays and celebrate Meyers, and we couldn't have done it without phenomenal local support.

Instrumental to the lighting of the Meyers Community Tree were Affordable Construction Services and Shane Electric; Liberty Energy/Lake Valley Fire District; and the skillful team of climbers John Dayberry of Native Elements, Bill Atkins, Chip Brejc and Ryan Curry, who wrapped the tree in lights. We'd also like to thank Sunrise Ski and Snowboard Rental for electricity, and the Meyers Downtown Café for supplying dozens of fresh baked cookies.

Establishments that donated to the tree lighting will be recognized with a plaque by Angie's Signs in the near future: Sierra-at-Tahoe, Steve's Transmission, New Visions Construction, Meyers Downtown Café, Wattabike/Vertical Sports, The Getaway Café, Stanley H. Jones, D.C., Champagne Productions, Got it! Real Estate & Rentals, Jeff Chamberlain DDS, Novasel & Schwarte, Strategic Marketing Group, Safe Haven Chiropractic, United Country Tahoe Gateway Realty, The Studio Lake Tahoe, South Tahoe CrossFit, Sunrise Ski and Snowboard Rentals, Century 21 at Tahoe Paradise, Maya's Mexican Grill, Bona Fide Books, Elevate Wellness Center, Lira's Supermarket, Chevron, Greg Ochoa – Oliver Luxury Real Estate, Roadrunner Gas & Liquor, Meek's, Divided Sky, Leonard Mechanical & Plumbing, Lake Tahoe Adventures, Pinnacle Real Estate Group of Lake Tahoe, the CCC and Alpine Environmental.

A big shout out to JoAnn Conner, president of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, who managed logistics and CalStar, to law enforcement for traffic control and Santa assistance and finally, to Santa Steve Rozier.

Thanks to all who came out to enjoy the festivities – we wish you a happy holiday!

Rene Brejc, Meyers Business Group

Opinion: Keep the Clean Water Act strong

By William K. Reilly

Next year will mark the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, a milestone for a series of landmark environmental laws that began with the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. Those actions set our nation on a course to restore our damaged natural resources, but today, because of political pressures and court rulings, the extent and durability of some of those key protections are at risk.

Since its enactment in 1972, the Clean Water Act has encountered resistance from powerful business interests that have tried to fill wetlands, drain marshes, develop shorelines and allow pollution to flow off their property. One approach these developers have used to weaken the law has been to try to limit its jurisdiction, to say it shouldn’t apply to this or that water body. The rationale has always been to argue that the water on the particular property in dispute didn’t connect with interstate bodies of water and therefore should be exempt from federal regulation.

When the act became law, two-thirds of our nation’s lakes, rivers and coastal waters were unsafe for fishing or swimming, and untreated sewage and industrial waste was routinely dumped into our waters. The law was partly a response to the shock the nation experienced when the filthy Cuyahoga River in

Cleveland erupted in flames. Since then, industrial pollution has declined significantly. Fish have returned to countless water bodies that were once all but lifeless. Progress has come in fits and starts – despite more litigation filed than the law's proponents expected or wanted – but it is real and evident.

Still, there are reasons for concern.

William K. Reilly was the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency from 1989 to 1993 and was the co-chairman of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Successful tree lighting in South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority would like to thank a number of people and partners for making this year's Community Winter Tree Lighting on Dec. 2 such a great success.

Special thanks to Liberty Energy for providing additional lighting and labor to make this the best and most energy efficient year ever. Also thanks to the city of South Lake Tahoe, Derek Tarpey Lake DJ, Borges Sleigh Rides, Rabbi Evon Yakar and Temple Bat Yam, Lake Tahoe Historical Society Museum, Tahoe Art League Gallery, South Lake Tahoe Optimists, Jody Filgo, Arline June Gordon, and all the special elves who contributed to the evening.

At this annual event, more than 450 people enjoyed cookies, hot cider and cocoa, were treated to free CFL bulbs from Liberty Energy, free sleigh rides from Borges Sleigh Rides, tours of the 1930s cabin and an up-close look at the decorated fire truck while festive music played. Santa posed with good girls and boys inside the senior center, while each building glowed with LED lights provided by Liberty Energy.

Caps for Kids were collected inside the senior center and Christmas Cheer (food, toys, and monetary) donations were accepted at the visitors centers in Nevada and California.

This year's community winter tree lighting was big and bright, thanks to so many who participated.

Alison Green, LTVA

Opinion: U.S. workers getting a raw deal

By Robert Reich

For most of the last century, the basic bargain at the heart of the American economy was that employers paid their workers enough to buy what American employers were selling.

That basic bargain created a virtuous cycle of higher living standards, more jobs and better wages.

Back in 1914, Henry Ford announced he was paying workers on his Model T assembly line $5 a day – three times what the typical factory employee earned at the time. The Wall Street Journal termed his action "an economic crime." But Ford knew it was a cunning business move. The higher wage turned Ford's

autoworkers into customers who could afford to buy Model Ts. In two years, Ford's profits more than doubled.

That was then. Now, Ford Motor Co. is paying its new hires half what it paid new employees a few years ago.

The basic bargain is over – not only at Ford but all over the American economy.

New data from the Commerce Department show employee pay is down to the smallest share of the economy since the government began collecting wage and salary data in 1929. Meanwhile, corporate profits now constitute the largest share of the economy since 1929. That, by the way, was the year of the Great Crash that ushered in the Great Depression.

In the years leading up to the Great Crash, most employers forgot Henry Ford's example. The wages of most American workers remained stagnant. The gains of economic growth went mainly into corporate profits and into the pockets of the very rich. American families maintained their standard of living by going deeper into debt. In 1929, the debt bubble popped.

Sound familiar? It should. The same thing happened in the years leading up to the crash of 2008.

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: New law will better help athletes who sustain concussions

By Jonathan Finnoff

In October 2006, a 13-year-old Washington football player named Zack Lystedt hit his head on the ground at the end of the second quarter of a football game. He grabbed his head and was in obvious distress. An injury timeout was called and Zach's coaches helped him off the field. After resting during halftime, Zack's coaches allowed him to return to the game. No medical personnel were on site to evaluate Zack and help decide whether he should or shouldn't return to the game.

During the remainder of the game, Zack's headache increased and he had difficulty remembering plays. At the end of the game, he collapsed and was airlifted to a trauma center where emergency surgery was performed on his brain. Although Zack survived, he was left with significant physical and cognitive disabilities that will severely limit him for the rest of his life.



Jonathan
Finnoff

Thankfully, when managed appropriately, a majority of concussions resolve without significant medical complications. But, when mismanaged, the results can be devastating.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1.4 million to 3.8 million concussions occur each year in the United States. Concussions are more common in younger athletes, females, those who are physically fatigued (ie: later in the game), and those who have sustained a prior concussion. The most frequent symptom of a concussion is a headache, but other symptoms can occur such as dizziness, confusion, memory difficulties, sleep disturbance, emotional changes, and difficulty concentrating. A common assumption is that an athlete doesn't have a concussion unless they are knocked out, but concussions are rarely associated with a loss of consciousness.

Any concussed athlete should immediately be removed from the game and evaluated by a healthcare provider. The primary treatment for concussions is physical and cognitive rest until the athlete's concussion symptoms resolve. Physical rest involves avoiding any activity that might increase the athlete's heart rate or blood pressure. Cognitive rest means avoiding activities that require a lot of concentration such as schoolwork or video games. After the athlete's symptoms have resolved, they should gradually increase their physical and cognitive activities over a period of approximately five days under the direction of a healthcare provider.

Most athletes who sustain a concussion feel better within a week. However, some athletes take far longer to heal and experience persistent concussion symptoms referred to as post-concussion syndrome. Other concussion complications include an increased risk of future concussions, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or a catastrophic injury such as second impact

syndrome that may cause persistent disability or death.

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy is seen in athletes with a history of concussions and usually begins around 43 years of age. It is characterized by emotional problems such as depression and violence, memory difficulties similar to Alzheimer's disease, and movement disorders similar to Parkinson's disease.

Second impact syndrome occurs when an athlete returns to activity before their symptoms resolve and subsequently sustain another concussion. This second injury can result in diffuse swelling within the brain, which results in severe disability or death.

Getting back to Zack, his tragic injury led the Brain Injury Association of Washington to team up with the CDC to launch a "Heads Up" concussion awareness program for youth athletes in the state. This program focused on educating athletes, parents, coaches, and health care providers about concussions. Despite their efforts, the program had limited success for a variety of reasons, the primary one being the lack of standardized and required concussion education and management. With this in mind, a youth sports concussion bill was drafted, unanimously approved by the Washington State House of Representatives and Senate, and subsequently signed into law by Gov. Christine Gregoire on May 14, 2009. The Zackery Lystedt Law was the first of its kind and required all athletes and their parents or guardians to sign a concussion information sheet prior to initiating practice at the start of each season. Any athlete with a suspected concussion was required to be removed from play and a written medical clearance was required prior to returning to sports. After this bill was enacted, for the first time in five years, there were no deaths or operable brain hemorrhages in Washington state during the high school football season.

Shortly after the Zackery Lystedt Law was enacted, the

American College of Sports Medicine, the largest sports science and sports medicine professional organization in the world, issued a national call for similar bills to be passed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Roger Goodell, the commissioner of the National Football League, also declared their support for the law and made it a primary objective of the NFL to assist in the passage of similar legislation throughout the United States. Every state-based chapter of the Brain Injury Association of America also endorsed the principles of the Zackery Lystedt Law. To date, 27 states and the District of Columbia have passed Lystedt-like laws, and several more states are working to introduce similar legislation.

In California, Assembly Bill 25 takes effect in January 2012. It mandates similar rules to those of the Zackery Lystedt Law, including yearly concussion education, immediate removal from athletic activity of any individual suspected of sustaining a concussion, and requiring that the athlete be evaluated by a licensed health care provider and receive written clearance prior to returning to athletic activity. These requirements improve concussion awareness and safety for our youth athletes.

In our region, Tahoe Center for Orthopedics has already instituted a multi-faceted program to address sports concussions including pre-season baseline concussion testing in athletes who participate in high risk sports, providing medical coverage for high risk high school sporting events, establishing a multi-disciplinary team of concussion experts to evaluate and treat concussed athletes, and educating the local sports and medical community about the sports concussions through lectures, live interviews, and articles.

While sports are an incredibly important part of social, cognitive, and physical development and provide a variety of long-term health benefits, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with sports, and to identify and treat sports

related injuries appropriately. As previously described, sports concussions are common in the United States and the potential complications associated with concussions are severe. Therefore, a better understanding of concussion identification and management among the public and health care providers is important, and standardization of concussion treatment is imperative to minimize the risks associated with this injury. I believe this bill is a major step in the right direction.

Tahoe Orthopedics and Sports Medicine is developing a comprehensive sports concussion program with the assistance of physician Jonathan Finnoff, an internationally recognized concussion expert and former co-director of the Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center Concussion Program. He recently joined the team of sports medicine clinicians at Tahoe Center for Orthopedics. To learn more about Tahoe Center for Orthopedics concussion program, go online.

Opinion: Adaptive strategies, money needed to keep studying Tahoe

By Geoff Schladow

Scientists at TERC have just submitted what will be the final set of research proposals under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, better known as SNPLMA. For the last 10 years these funds, approximately $3.5 million per year, were available on a competitive basis to fund research that was

deemed both scientifically rigorous and important to the efforts to restore Lake Tahoe.

Over the years, the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and its collaborators have been able to write proposals that received substantial funding from these SNPLMA funds. The results of that funding has led to the development of a range of products including tools for modeling lake clarity and quantifying pollutant inputs from urban areas, a better understanding of nearshore water quality using remotely sensed data, and the impact of the Angora Fire on the lake. Many other projects are still under way, and will be completed in the next two years. Many of the actions that will be undertaken at Tahoe in the coming years will be based on the findings of this research.



Geoff Schladow

What happens in the coming years, as conditions change and new questions and new threats to Lake Tahoe arise? That is difficult to know. Traditional science funding, from sources such as the National Science Foundation, is usually targeted at generalized questions. If the research is addressing a Tahoe-specific question, NSF will expect local entities to fund it. Locally, however, funding for most everything is in short supply, and likely to remain so for some time to come. Private and philanthropic funding has always been an important part of TERC’s budget, and our hope is that this will remain strong.

My concern, as we use the science conducted to date to guide

the restoration of Lake Tahoe, is that we stay mindful of the fact that our knowledge is always incomplete. What seems in 2011 as the best strategy may in time be found wanting. We will only know this if monitoring and focused research is continued, and ways to conduct that in affordable ways are found. The other essential ingredient is the willingness of management agencies to continue to work with scientists to assess progress and, if necessary, to adapt the strategies.

In more robust economic times, this is how things happened and how progress was made. The challenge is to ensure that it continues to happen. As 2011 draws to a close, I want to thank all those who helped us with the many things we were able to accomplish this year. This ranges from our incredibly dedicated staff, our volunteer docents, the many students and interns that work through TERC, our partners in other research institutes and in the numerous Tahoe agencies, those who visit our education centers, and those of you who have helped fund our research and education programs. I wish you all a safe and peaceful holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in 2012.

Geoff Schladow is director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center.

Opinion: Ways to prevent being scammed during the

holidays

By Armando Avina

The Washoe County Sheriff’s Office would like to warn people to be aware of scams in which dishonest people pose as friends, family, respected companies and government agencies to get people to send money immediately. Already this holiday season, fraudulent activities have been reported about persons representing themselves as working through reputable organizations by telephone.

Scammers lead a person to believe that money needs to be sent immediately in order to help out a loved one or persons in urgent need. Scammers commonly receive information from social networking sites, where people frequently post excessive personal information about themselves and their loved ones. It is important that everyone know and understand the risks involved when posting information online. Most of these predators are from outside the United States.

Here are a few safeguards:

With caller ID, don’t answer a call if you don’t recognize the telephone number. That goes for restricted, private and unknown numbers as well. Allow the unfamiliar caller to leave a message.

If you don’t have caller ID or a message system, answer the phone and request the person identify themselves and provide you with a call-back number. This pertains to people that are unrecognizable. Don’t allow the caller to dictate the conversation. Simply hang up the phone on unidentified persons.

If the unwanted calls persist, tell the caller that you have already called your local law enforcement agency and they are investigating.

Do not post personal information on social networking sites. Advise your acquaintances' to do the same. Never post addresses, telephone numbers and places you are visiting or planning to visit.

Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as members of organizations or officials asking for donations via email or social networking sites.

Be aware of whom you are dealing with when providing your personal and financial information. Providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.

Do not send money through electronic services if you're called regarding a loved one that has been incarcerated in another county, state or country without verification of that family member's status. Example, "Your loved one is in jail and you need to send $2,000 through Western Union, in order to bail them out."

A "con artist" is someone who makes a living by swindling kindhearted people. These criminals will lie, distract or persuade people into making split-second decisions. Use good judgment and confirm information before taking action. A "con artist" constantly looks for new ways to defraud the public. Do all you can to protect yourself from these thieves.

The sheriff's office encourages the public to report these fraudulent scams to law enforcement immediately by calling (775) 832.9276.

Armando Avino is a deputy with Washoe County Sheriff's Departmennt.