Opinion: Successful Thanksgiving feast

To the community,

The Brotherhood Motorcycle Club wishes to thank local businesses and community members in South Lake Tahoe and Stateline for their generous donations to our annual fundraiser, HOGG WILD XVI.

Because of our community's generosity we were able to provide 50 complete turkey dinners to families in need this Thanksgiving.

The giveaway at Sierra Community Church was a huge success thanks to the following individuals, businesses and community members. Thanks to Christine from Lira's Market for putting the dinner packages together. Thanks to Joanne, Jody, Virginia and Tom Davis from Christmas Cheer who were there to help distribute the turkey dinners at the Sierra Community Church. Thanks to southtahoenow.com news site for the online promotion of our event.

The Brotherhood Motorcycle Club could not have done this without the generous raffle prize donations from our wonderful community and numerous individuals for our annual event. Also, a special thanks to The Brothers Bar for hosting our event and Sierra Community Church for allowing our annual Turkey Giveaway to be held there.

Thank you, South Lake Tahoe.

Brotherhood Motorcycle Club

Opinion: Should Nevada switch time zones?

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

We've been told over and over that there's no quick fix for Nevada's grinding unemployment and underwater mortgages. So how about an extra hour of daylight to brighten these dark days?

From the Internet comes a provocative idea: Nevada should part ways with the Pacific time zone of the coastal states and join Arizona, Idaho and Utah in the Mountain time zone.

It would not, of course, increase the amount of daylight in a 24-hour period. But on a day like today it would push sunset from 4:32pm to 5:32pm – ending the depressing late-fall phenomenon of leaving work – for those of us still with jobs – at 5pm only to find night has fallen.

More would be awake for the early sunshine – sunrise would on a day like today go from 6:16am to 7:17am.

Nevada rides at the rear of the parade that is the Pacific Time Zone, a fact that becomes apparent after daylight saving time ends and darkness arrives an hour earlier.

Consider Los Angeles at the western edge of the time zone: Sunset today is at 4:49pm, according to the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department. They get the beach and 17 minutes more of evening light.

Then consider Phoenix, in the Mountain time zone. There, the sun will not set until 5:25pm.

It would be a stretch to describe the idea of changing time zones a movement. It's mostly the griping of co-workers and one man ranting on a blog.

When the state moved its clocks back this month, Hugh Jackson, proprietor of lasvegasgleaner.com, opined: “Lickety-split it’s going to be getting dark around here at, oh, 4:14 in the afternoon. Dreary, depression-inducing, soul-sucking darkness and it’s not even cocktail time … isn’t that what North Dakota is for?”

While a lone voice, Jackson, a liberal commentator, raises an interesting question: Why is Nevada time-tethered to California?

Getting a state or county’s time zone changed is uncommon, but not unprecedented.

Read the whole story

Opinion: People have a right to know what they are eating

By Gary Hirshberg and Eric Schlosser

An unprecedented agricultural experiment is being conducted at America’s dinner tables. While none of the processed food we ate 20 years ago contained genetically engineered ingredients, now 75 percent of it does — even though the long-term human health and environmental impacts are unknown. The Food and Drug Administration doesn’t require labeling of genetically engineered foods. But as the current drive to get labeling on the ballot in California confirms, consumers want to know whether our food contains these revolutionary new things.

In 1992, the FDA ruled that genetically engineered foods didn’t need independent safety tests or labeling requirements

before being introduced. But one of its own scientists disagreed, warning there were “profound differences” with genetically engineered foods. Genetically engineered seed manufacturers were allowed to sell their products without telling consumers. A 2006 survey found that 74 percent of Americans had no idea that genetically engineered foods were already being sold.

Biotech companies have fought labeling, claiming genetically engineered crops are “substantially the same” and produce larger yields – both unproven claims. But genetically engineered crops have led to the increased use of pesticides, often sold by the same companies that make genetically engineered seeds.

About 94 percent of U.S. grown soybeans are genetically engineered and contain a gene that protects them against glyphosate, now the nation’s most widely used pesticide. But glyphosate is becoming ineffective as “superweeds” become resistant to it, forcing farmers to use even stronger herbicides. Widespread adoption of genetically engineered corn has also led to pesticide resistance.

Gary Hirshberg is the president and CE-Yo of Stonyfield Yogurt. Eric Schlosser is the author of “Fast Food Nation” and co-producer of the documentary “Food, Inc.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Nevada – the state that loves to kill things

By Keaven Van Lom

The state of Nevada is rebranding itself as the "go to" state if you detest democracy and love to kill things. With the highest unemployment and foreclosure rate in the country, along with a mammoth meth crisis, Nevada's good old boy network has cooked up a plan for the decrepit state by tossing out democracy and offering up more wildlife to slaughter in hopes of attaining an economic path of recovery by satiating trophy hunters.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife, whose commission seats happen to be occupied by hunters, kicked off the marketing plan when they added the majestic black bear to the list of hunting trophies to snag in the beautiful state. In an amazing display of abuse of public office, and the thwarting of democracy, the commission passed Nevada's first bear hunt despite overwhelming public opposition and pleas to Gov. Brian Sandoval to intercede.

Despite polls showing fervent opposition to the hunt, letters to media, nearly 4,000 emails to NDoW on record against the hunt (less than 100 for it), nearly 19,000 anti-hunting signatures flopped on their desks, rallies and so forth, the trophy hunting commissioners took their cue from fascist countries and were able to do what small groups of self-serving, pathological males have always been able to do: what they want despite what the majority wants. The death of democracy now joins the state's dead, bloodied bears.

As one observer stated, "The commissioners had already made up their minds about the hunt way before any public discussions where brought up and told us when they stated, 'We're having

the bear hunt because we can’. If you’re a public officer elected or appointed in Nevada, you rule not serve.”

A lot of great marketing slogans have come in from citizens who want to help the state attract characters who hate the democratic process and who have, say, a certain amount of bloodlust. Here are some noteworthy ones:

> Welcome to the new Wild West. Where random shootings are on the increase and hunting small, unsustainable populations to extinction are encouraged for your entertainment.
>
> Come to Nevada; where real men kill stuff.
>
> Welcome to Nevada; where democracy is as awful as your craps game.
>
> Nevada, your one stop resource: rent a hooker, lose your shirt and kill your share of our unsustainable wildlife. Commit all your sins in just one state! Governor Sandoval has appointed Stevie Wonder to keep an eye on things.

A petition is now circulating to change the iconic Reno arch sign that straddles Virginia Street in downtown Reno. Citizens hope to reword the famous landmark from: “Reno. The Biggest Little City in the World” to “Welcome to Nevada. Have Fun Killing Our Wildlife.”

The sign change would certainly be apropos. It’s not like eco-tourism or the actual protection of wildlife to live wild and free was ever on the agenda. Nevada hosts animal snuffing groups such as the Safari Club International, killing accoutrement retailers such as Cabela’s and Scheels, and Red Rock Hounds for hunting hounds to tree your bears before you shoot them down. Born Free USA, who works to protect wildlife in their natural habitats, and encourage compassionate conservation globally, gives Nevada a D minus as one of the states where cruel body-gripping traps are least regulated. Desert Bighorn Sheep are being introduced in the Virginia

Range for trophy hunting. To do that, plans are afoot to eradicate predators such as mountain lions, and cap underground springs so the area's wild horses can't find water.

Well, the Bureau of Land Management has already made life hell for the state's wild horses. Heck, if you're a wild animal in Nevada, you're as unlucky as a blue hair at a rigged slot.

On a positive note, a local church group is fervently praying that baby Jesus will come to life from a front lawn nativity scene in Reno on Christmas Eve wielding a giant, golden saw. The congregation believes the baby Jesus will then saw the state from the continent and float it over to attach somewhere in the south where animal cruelty and abuse is pandemic. This will help the state feel more at home with their brethren says the group.

Liberals are just hoping the state attaches itself to Washington where democracy has long gone by the wayside, and animal advocates are encouraging cowardly hunters to enlist in one of America's numerous wars and unleash their penchant for violence on something that can shoot back.

Will the new marketing ploy work, or will it send Nevadans packing to states where less blood flows and their voice and opinions actually count? Will they stay and vote out a Governor who turned a blind eye to his arrogant wildlife commission who snubbed a majority and continues to imperil innocent creatures?

Now that Nevada has gone rogue, perhaps Sarah Palin will move in and bring some luster back to the tarnished silver state. After all, Palin can now legally add decapitated black bear and Bighorn Sheep heads to her wall of horrors as well as enjoy some roulette. You betcha.

Keaven Van Lom is a freelance writer living in Truckee, CA. She welcomes your comments at keaven@suddenlink.net.

Opinion: Redevelopment borrowing binge is reckless folly

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the No. 17, 2011, Sacramento Bee.***

Leaders at California's redevelopment agencies may sincerely believe they are helping local residents. Some of their projects may actually be worth protecting.

Still, the agencies' borrowing binge while on the chopping block is financially risky at best, downright irresponsible at worst.

The survival instinct kicked in this year after Gov. Jerry Brown targeted them for elimination to claw back $1.7 billion a year in revenue.

The agencies took on an unprecedented $1.2 billion in new debt this year – all backed by local property taxes. In part because so many bond issues went to market, redevelopment agencies had to promise unusually high rates of return to investors.

Two-thirds of the record 80 bond issues this year carried interest rates of more than 7 percent, the highest in two decades, according to a Bee analysis of records kept by the state treasurer. The more costly debt repayments will end up on local residents' tab, as The Bee's Loretta Kalb and Phillip Reese reported Sunday.

These bond issues may be the final ones for the redevelopment agencies. Under a deal approved by the Legislature, they had until Oct. 1 to either share their property tax proceeds with the state or shut down. The California Redevelopment Association and League of California Cities are suing to block that plan so agencies can stay in business. The state Supreme Court is set to rule in mid-January.

Read the whole story

Opinion: How banks can help end financial crises

By Robert Leeson

The cause of financial crises – and thus the central malfunction of capitalism – is the discretion allocated to banks to stop lending. If such destabilizing discretion were exercised by a foreign dictator, and if the economic flow were related to oil or shipping lanes, it would be regarded as a national security issue to be followed by an ultimatum and war.

To eliminate financial crises we need an injunction of biblical proportions: Banks who do not lend, neither shall they take deposits.

Banking should be a simple flow: channeling the current savings of one person into current borrowing by some else. This spending flow can be blocked at three points: Individuals can hoard savings under the mattress, and banks can hoard deposits or use them to buy secondhand assets (i.e., existing government bonds).

The first blockage was largely removed by Federal Deposit Insurance.

The other two can be engineered away by a simple change in bank charters: Deposits should be accepted only if they will be transformed into loans for capital expenditures (to build offices, factories, equipment and machinery). Deposits should be swept into a bank's account at the Federal Reserve and held until the bank has a capital expenditure loan to make (or depositor withdrawals to meet).

If banks do not wish to reacquire their traditional – but now neglected – role of assessing and bearing the risks associated with making loans, the excess deposits should fund newly issued government bonds and infrastructure projects.

All parties would benefit.

First, governments: There wouldn't be credit-crunch recessions to jeopardize re-election chances.

Robert Leeson is a visiting professor of economics at Stanford University and the University of Trento and adjunct professor at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.

Read the whole story

Opinion: New education act better option than waiver

By Tom Torlakson

Parents, teachers, administrators and members of Congress all seem to agree on this much: It's time for No Child Left Behind

to go. But what should take its place?

As a teacher and state superintendent of public instruction, I've seen the shortcomings of this federal law firsthand:

– Mislabeling as failures schools that are improving.


Tom Torlakson

– Providing very little funding to pay for a lot of mandates.

– Directing scarce resources toward services parents don't seem to want.

– And leaving the troubling achievement gap – the disparity in learning among different groups of students as measured by standardized tests – nearly as large as it was 10 years ago.

Just this fall, NCLB labeled as a "failure" Westmoor High in Daly City – my alma mater – even though its test scores continue to climb and now stand just two points from the statewide academic goal.

I've been outspoken about the need for relief from NCLB sanctions, but I'm just as concerned that California not simply trade one flawed policy for another. Unfortunately, that appears to be just the unfair choice federal officials have placed before the state Board of Education.

To obtain a temporary waiver from No Child Left Behind, California would have to meet 11 new federal mandates – and do so quickly – without one dollar of new resources.

The price tag for meeting these requirements is likely to reach $2 billion to $3 billion, depending upon how each is implemented – all within the next year or two, even as our schools continue to cope with a statewide financial emergency and the dire threat of further funding cutbacks.

Tom Torlakson is California's superintendent of public instruction.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Anonymous online commenting only encourages civic bile

By William Endicott

It was with some trepidation that I logged on to sacbee.com and scrolled down to reader comments on Jennifer Garza's recent story about the inclusive philosophy of St. Mark's United Methodist Church and its gay and straight congregation.

Stories that mix religion and gay rights are always ripe for the most outrageous comments from both sides of that divide. So I feared the worst and those fears very quickly proved to be well-founded.

The very first comment I saw made mention of a particular body part and was so offensive that it does not bear repeating.

That was followed by this: "Is it just me, or does anyone else weary of the 'gay in your face' news we endure day in, day in,

day out.”

From the other side, someone compared anti-gay Christians to sociopolitical fascists and another declared, “Nothing is so immoral as Christianity.”

And my favorite: “Another reason why I quit getting the *Bee*,” apparently missing the irony in the fact that he or she was commenting on a Bee story.

A few of the nearly 300 comments that were there when last I looked were thoughtful, some were inane, ignorant and/or snide, others were hateful and mean-spirited. But most had one thing in common: They were anonymous.

William Endicott is a former deputy managing editor of The Bee.

Read the whole story

Opinion: CHP thankful for turkey drive

To the community,

The CHP Turkey Drive on Nov. 19 was very successful; collecting 70 turkeys.

The CHP South Lake Tahoe area would like to thank Sam Coolbaugh and Bijou Safeway for providing our collection location, STMS Club Live for their help during the

collection day, and the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center and Sierra Community Church for providing crucial services for our

community.

A special thank you to everyone who supported our community through this effort.

Jeff Gartner, California Highway Patrol

Opinion: Is anyone listening to the Occupy movement?

By Garry Bowen

Last Thursday we had our first official Occupy Tahoe (according to some, it will soon be Occupy SLT, to herald the idea that someone had co-opted the first).

What is Occupy? Is that the same as Occupied Berlin or, Occupied Lebanon?



Garry Bowen

No, it appears it is a more spontaneous gut-reaction to the unanswered shenanigans of our corrupted, dysfunctional system, brought about by an increasingly out-of-touch leadership, at many, many levels. It is the pent-up answer to “Where is the outrage?”

Watching C-SPAN over the weekend, the comments shifted back and forth between two erstwhile Wall Street organizers, Adam Jewler (D.C.) and Amin Husain (Wall Street), who appeared pretty cogent and peaceful in their attribution to its being merely a voice of the people, one that they don't ordinarily have or use. As C-SPAN routinely opens a talk-line in three categories, Liberal, Conservative, and Independent, two out of three were pretty much in concert with the First Amendment's rights being exercised, while the third was resplendent with "socialists", "pinkos", and "watch your back from now on" as if they were to be the guardians of the truth.

Even the *New York Times* weighed in Nov. 21, wondering whether it justified current journalism standards, by questioning whether "it would continue to keep its" hold on the collective media imagination?" The *NYT* also said, "It was and is a grass-roots combustion that happened to have a lot of cameras pointed at it."

As concluded, "reporters live for spectacle", as if Hollywood explosions, car chases, and ambulance-chasing (for lawyers) were their only stock-in-trade, and any other thoughts were some sort of aberration. Given the ignorance afforded the societal loss of trillions of dollars in constituent value, followed by the immediate return of eight figure bonuses, as if nothing untoward had occurred (i.e., business as usual), along with media hand-wringing as to when our legislators will ever wake-up again to our realities, and not just theirs, I thought I'd digress.

In response to our programmed shorter and shorter attention spans, I will relate to the departed Joseph Kruth, an international lawyer, living in Zephyr Heights, who envisioned a future for Tahoe with his creation of the Tahoe Center for a Sustainable Future back in the early 1990s.

One of the last conversations we had (he died of cancer) was about his concern for the ever-declining purchasing power of

the dollar and the ever-increasing income gap. At one time, it was in the 14 to 15 times an average worker range, as opposed to today's 300 times. It was becoming obvious that a sustainable society would not be possible if the needs of the populace were undermined by policies that continued to favor those whose wealth was increasing their power.

Undermining the needs of the populace is in fact a sustainable principle, and we are on the verge of shutting down any pretense of fairness if this situation is allowed to continue. Sadly, there are now those in society who could care less, as long as they are not bothered to think about it.

It would seem that some in the journalism business, according to Patrick Bruner, an Occupy Wall Street organizer, don't recognize that "we're righting a system and this media is part of that system – and when this media doesn't cover us in a fair fight, the desire isn't to shame them, it's to create an alternative."

Communications, at its core, means "to share, or hold in common", which is, at essence, what Occupy is really about, as our own Tahoe experience shows. Although only between 30 and 40 people were there, it was impressive to hear fully 60 percent or so of the vehicles traveling by that honked in solidarity, not to be confused here with the absence of metropolitan horn-honking of yesteryear. This was followed by those on *Lake Tahoe News* who thanked those in support for showing up in Stateline.

I have always considered the most important part of Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" to be the Upton Sinclair quote within, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it." This has now infected our entire culture, as the source of power that others wield in abeyance; this is not sustainable as it is a form of dumbing down.

Much better the mantra of 7-year-old Christian, who “occupied” while his bad held a banner; as someone would drive up to the curb, roll-down the window, and offer their respects, Christian would run up to the curb also, and yell out, in his own inimitable way: “We need a better future!“

So be it. Is anyone really listening?

Garry Bowen has a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or (775) 690.6900.