

Opinion: Another round of McCarthyism

By Stephen D. Foster Jr., Addicting Info

Get ready for another round of McCarthyism. Mitt Romney, Michele Bachmann, and Rick Santorum have all signed a pledge to form a commission to investigate the LGBT community if elected President.

This pledge was created by the National Organization For Marriage, and they have a history of extreme views against homosexuals and anyone who votes to extend marriage rights to them.

The pledge reads as follows.

I, [candidate name], pledge to the American people that if elected President, I will:

[...] establish a presidential commission on religious liberty to investigate and document reports of Americans who have been harassed or threatened for exercising key civil rights to organize, to speak, to donate or to vote for marriage and to propose new protections, if needed.

In other words, the extreme right wing is going to persecute homosexuals on a whole new level if they have power after the 2012 Election. Homosexuals and supporters of marriage equality will be intimidated, interrogated, and stripped of their right to speak freely. The religious right wing has been allowed to push their un-American and unconstitutional agenda for far too long. Americans must push back. If we continue to do nothing, we could all be persecuted by this fanatical group.

Opinion: Mussel threat to Lake Tahoe needs to be taken seriously

Publisher's note: *The following editorial is from the Aug. 13, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

The threat posed to Lake Tahoe by an invasion by quagga mussels no longer is theoretical.

With the discovery of the invasive mussels on a boat bound for Tahoe last week at the Spooner Summit inspection station turned the worrisome theory to dangerous reality.

An infestation in Lake Tahoe would be disastrous. The mussels multiply rapidly once they get a foothold. They attach themselves to water intakes, docks and boats. They force out other species by monopolizing the food supply. They litter beaches with sharp, smelly shells. Once a colony has been established, it is nearly impossible to remove.

Already the mussels have moved from the Great Lakes, where they have played havoc with water supplies, to Lake Mead in Southern Nevada.

Read the whole story

Opinion: The bicycle is the vehicle to transform a community

Publisher's note: *The following is Ty Polastri's speech from the Aug. 16, 2011, environmental summit at Homewood.*

By Ty Polastri

How many of you have ever ridden a bicycle?

How many continue to ride today?

The No. 1 reason people no longer ride is because they don't feel safe. They don't feel safe riding a bicycle to work, school, running errands or going to the beach out of fear they will be injured from an automobile.

And we need to change that.

From 2005-07, over 2000 residents took magic markers to aerial photos and laid out the communities they would like to see



during the placed-based workshops of Pathways 2007 – the outcome from that process was a consensus for a more people-centric, multi-modal, and sustainable community.

What is people centric?

The way I look at it is when people ride their bike or walk they become more intimate with their surroundings:

- They become more aware of the air they breathe
- They make eye contact and connect with one another

- They move their bodies and happy neurotransmitters are released
- They see businesses for the first time and stop to shop, eat or drink.
- It's a slower pace that allows the world to penetrate us.

How do we plan a more people centric community?

One way is to begin changing the context of how we see the downtown. What if we saw the roadway as a life-way, and the life-way as an avenue for livability? From this context we begin looking beyond the limits of the curbs and see the streetscape full of people, businesses, schools, parks and residences. There are children at play, adults at work, shoppers strolling, and elderly and the disabled moving with ease and safety. The streets are a streetscape of aliveness full of vitality and commerce, rich in color and texture, with places for people to commune with nature and each other.

Another way is at the planning table with highway engineers, behaviorists, economic development specialists and local government representatives speaking about the uses of the buildings on the streetscape and reframing the design parameters to include a more humanistic approach to the mobility of people, goods and services.

For example, an area of the streetscape has several restaurants, wouldn't it be cool to provide space so they could set up sidewalk dinning. Or another section of the streetscape has a senior's housing complex. We will need to consider their needs as for some of them may be hearing, sight and mobility impaired. We may need to design their streetscape to aid their safe mobility and use of public transit. What if a vacant lot was turned into a public meeting place with benches and landscaping that could provide a convenient time out from our busy lives.

When we begin to look at people's needs and activities, and the uses of the buildings on the streetscape, we begin re-humanizing ourselves and we set the stage for reclaiming our community where the automobile no longer is the dominate user of the streetscape – but rather one element of a more multi-modal mobility plan.

Another phrase that is being used to describe this streetscape is complete streets.

Complete streets are consistent with the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact mandate to reduce dependency on the automobile and green house gas emissions, meets Pathways 2007 thresholds, the Prosperity Plan, and is under mandate by the state of California.

We know what needs to be done.

We need leadership and collaboration among federal, state, local agencies and the private sector to work together to co-design our communities, develop cost effective investment strategies, and efficient policies that enable us to begin reshaping our communities for the 50 million California residents who will descend upon us in the coming decades – with the intent of restoring their spirits, reconnecting with family and friends, and giving a go at a new challenge that may include of biking, skiing, hiking, shopping, and all the other activities that make up the Tahoe Lifestyle.

So, you see it's not really about the bicycle alone.

But when a community accommodates for the bicycle it becomes the vehicle that sets in motion a transformation for accommodating all users on the streetscape, and sends a clear message that we care about the long-term health of our communities, the environment and the economy.

At the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition we are doing our part to help promote, educate and move toward a more livable and

sustainable Lake Tahoe.

Ride with us as we move to restore the heart, vitality and safety of our communities for generations to come.

Thank you.

Ty Polastri is president of the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition.

Opinion: Fix flawed fire fee before it goes up in smoke

By George Skelton, Los Angeles Times

On the surface, the new state fire fee passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown seems prudent and fair. It requires people who live in woodsy and brushy terrain, being soothed by nature, to pay a larger share of their fire protection costs.

But this legislation was written in such haste, without public scrutiny or Capitol vetting, that no one really is sure how it's going to work. It was cobbled together at the last moment before the Legislature's June 15 budget deadline in order to help balance the deficit-ridden general fund.

And it smacks of Democratic payback for the Republicans' refusal to vote for Brown's tax proposal. Republican legislators represent most of the rural areas targeted for fire fees.

A couple of obstacles loom, however, before Sacramento can pocket the fee money.

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn. intends to sue, claiming that the fee actually is a tax. Therefore it should have required a two-thirds vote in the Legislature, not a simple majority. The bill passed pretty much on a party line vote.

Republican state Sen. Ted Gaines (R-Roseville) is trying to generate support for a ballot referendum to repeal the fee. He needs to collect 505,000 voter signatures by Oct. 6 and concedes “it’s an uphill battle.”

The cost of collecting enough signatures will be at least \$2 million. There’s not enough at stake for special interests or deep-pocket types to bankroll such a venture. The proposed annual fee, per habitable structure, is capped at \$150.

“Maybe it’ll catch fire,” Gaines told me, not really intending the pun. “It could take off with folks of a populist perspective. It’s another intrusion of government coming at the people’s wallet.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Calling NDOW about bears could get the animal killed

To the community,

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has a little-publicized Three Strikes policy that broadly affects anyone who lives in bear country.

According to Mike Dobel, NDOW game supervisor, “A bear shall

be humanely killed if, despite the application of deterrent methods, has been captured or otherwise handled three (3) times by NDOW to resolve nuisance concerns.” He further adds “A bear shall be humanely killed if it demonstrates three (3) times a loss of wariness of humans displayed through three (3) captures near permanent structures, buildings or dwellings frequently used by humans.”



Bears face
three-strike
law in Nevada.

Photo/Mark
Smith

That this means is, if you call the sheriff or NDOW because of a bear in your neighborhood, NDOW records a “strike” against that bear, and the third time the bear is killed. NDOW further classifies “to resolve nuisance concerns” anytime they must respond to a call, regardless of how benign the bear’s actions are. A bear in the tree in the forest near your home, strike one. A bear crosses the street to get into the woods, strike two. A bear nibbling on the bird seed you put out, strike three – and it is dead.

As the BEAR League says, “A fed bear is a dead bear.” And I would add, “think before you call NDOW.”

Don’t let them keep executing bears for doing what bears do. Only call if the bear is a threat or doing serious damage.

Mark Smith, Incline Village

Caltrans issues warning to cyclists, walkers in Tahoe construction zone

By Deanna Shoopman

Caltrans is reminding pedestrians and cyclists to respect the cone zone around Lake Tahoe Basin projects, especially along the stretch from Trout Creek Bridge to Ski Run Boulevard on Highway 50.



Caltrans crews are reporting that pedestrians and cyclists are crossing through the cone zone to access various destinations along the project site.

“The safety of all parties is our top priority and illegally entering a cone zone is extremely unsafe,” said Jody Jones, Caltrans’ district three director. “We understand the inconveniences these types of projects present, but we must enforce respect of the cone zones to ensure everybody’s safety.”

Caltrans officials are reminding pedestrians and cyclists that entering a cone zone is:

- Unsafe and can lead to serious injury and/or death
- Interferes with and delays construction
- Can result in a citation and fine

The project on from Trout Creek Bridge to Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe is a 2 mile, \$40.6 million road improvement

project that is part of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program. The project includes:

- New sand traps, stormwater detention vaults and filtration ponds to collect and treat runoff before it reaches Lake Tahoe
- Class II bike lanes
- ADA-compliant sidewalks
- Pedestrian lighting
- New intersection signals, landscaping and streetscaping
- Shoulders widening to six feet

“We are working hard to keep the construction on schedule so that cyclists and pedestrians can enjoy South Lake Tahoe without this significant inconvenience,” Jones said. “In the meantime, we just want everybody to be safe and to avoid entering a cone zone illegally.”

The project is funded by a combination of state, federal and local funds. In addition, \$4.43 million in donated land was contributed by El Dorado County and the city of South Lake Tahoe.

Deanna Shoopman is a spokeswoman for Caltrans.

Opinion: New governance vital to balance Tahoe's future

By Ross Miller

Conflicts between California and Nevada over how to manage

Lake Tahoe are severely hindering effective management of a unique resource shared by the two states.

It has been widely suggested that the issue is simply a battle between Nevada's desire for more growth and California's desire to protect the environment. The reality is that the different perspectives of the two states are considerably more nuanced, and deserve greater explanation and examination. As Nevada's secretary of state, one of my duties is to serve as a member of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency board. In that capacity, I feel a responsibility to work toward developing a renewed commitment on the board to develop a comprehensive plan that will make Lake Tahoe a sustainable resource for all its users.

It is important to consider the history of the TRPA and its formation as a response to the unrestrained growth of earlier decades. Its formation effectively put the brakes on that growth, and ostensibly provided the two states an opportunity to work together to repair the environmental damage caused by that growth with an eye toward more well-planned, responsible projects. As governor of Nevada during the 1990s, my father, Bob Miller, worked closely with California Gov. Pete Wilson, our congressional delegation and President Bill Clinton to obtain significant federal funding aimed at repairing the effects of unrestrained growth before TRPA was formed. Through the creation of the Lake Tahoe Summit and the Environmental Improvement Plan, we cooperated and made significant progress.

Today, irrefutable science tells us that Lake Tahoe's clarity and environmental sustainability are threatened by the same fine sediment runoff from urban areas that were developed in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as significant near-shore nitrogen and phosphorus contaminants.

The current board structure and the inability to update a comprehensive plan have resulted in a failure to address this threshold issue. Instead, we are left with an endless and

seemingly intractable process that prevents even the most environmentally responsible private restoration efforts. A policy of responsible redevelopment, using technology that has evolved during the subsequent decades, could provide a sustainable economic climate and effectively protect the Lake Tahoe environment.

We can no longer rely on big federal earmarks to restore any damage to Lake Tahoe. The only way that we are going to realize the environmental goals we seek is by tearing down the urban development of earlier decades, and rebuilding in an eco-friendly manner. Doing so will require broad-based cooperation between the public and private sectors, and a recognition that sustaining Lake Tahoe environmentally will require sustaining it economically as well.

Ross Miller is Nevada's secretary of state and a member of the board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Time to swing for the fences in Nevada

By Jon Ralston, Las Vegas Sun

Watching the predictable, partisan reaction to the national unemployment rate and the jobs report last week made me wonder if people in Nevada know just how bad we have it.

We can only dream of 9.1 percent unemployment here. The last time we were that low? George W. Bush was languishing as a lame duck, then-Gov. Jim Gibbons was preparing to call a

special session to deal with a budget shortfall and Dina Titus was basking in her victory over Rep. Jon Porter.

A political lifetime ago.

Unemployment in Nevada is now at 12.4 percent, actually down from nearly 15 percent late last year. Why? I have no patience for the pointless partisan blame game, especially here where neither Republicans nor Democrats have provided the leadership to help cushion Nevada's economy when national recessions hit or chart a reasonable path forward.

But have no fear. Unlike that dysfunctional Congress with unprecedented unpopularity, in Nevada the parties united to revamp the economic development structure so businesses will flock here. Or not.

So as the state's seminal industry looks to China, two Nevada cities (North Las Vegas and Reno) edge toward a financial precipice and the mining industry prepares to celebrate its tax-free, \$1,600-an-ounce golden year at Lake Tahoe, it's hard to see how far we've come in 25 years, much less since unemployment was at 9 percent in those halcyon, late days of 2008.

Don't misunderstand: Gov. Brian Sandoval taking the lead on economic development through the celebrated Assembly Bill 449 and bringing in some fine minds, especially entrepreneur Steve Hill, may make some sense. But all that bill does is change the structure (sorry, Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki) and try to consolidate the disparate economic diversification elements.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Despite federal deal, still lots of work to be done on budget

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Aug. 1, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

It would be difficult to find anyone anywhere who's happy about the deal reached by President Barack Obama and Republican leaders to raise the federal debt limit over the weekend.

It also would be difficult to point to anyone in the nation's capital who has performed heroically in recent weeks – not the president, not the leaders of either party in Congress – as the deadline for avoiding an unprecedented default approached.

There were no winners in the long, bitter debate and lots of losers – including a president whose approval rate has hit a new low.

By the time the politicians stepped to the microphones on Sunday to announce that they had an agreement, many Americans had had enough of all of them. And the nasty sniping that continued on Monday only added to the perception that the American government was no longer working to the benefit of the citizens.

But on Saturday it was clear that Congress had reached a stalemate. As in any game of "Chicken," there comes a time when someone must turn away or risk catastrophe. When the Senate rejected the latest House plan to raise the debt limit and the House rejected the latest Senate plan, even before the Senate voted on it, the time had come.

That's when the combatants should – and did – call an end to

the current hostilities and move on to the next battle. And there are lots of battles yet to come.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Putting the spotlight on domestic violence

By Ellen R. Shaffer

Her husband described the abuse: “I would hold her hostage and terrorize her.” The Kaiser patient reported how she finally decided to leave: “I’ll never forget the office visit when my physician said, ‘I’m afraid if your husband doesn’t kill you, the stress will.’ ”

Last week’s groundbreaking decision by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to require health plans to cover domestic violence counseling without requiring a co-pay will give women and their health care providers an important new incentive to call out the distress signals of abuse, and to take action.

Domestic violence is a widespread, harmful and expensive public health issue. Public awareness campaigns, advocacy groups and laws offer support and a way out, but too many individuals remain isolated and stigmatized. Every year, 2 million women experience domestic violence, more than new cases of breast cancer or deaths from cardiovascular disease. Also:

– More than three women a day are murdered by current or

former husbands or boyfriends.

- Homicide is the second-leading cause of injury-related death among pregnant women.
- 6.5 percent of California women report physical violence by a partner in the past year.
- 24 percent of U.S. women have experienced physical domestic abuse at some point in their lives. Domestic violence can include threats, isolation, humiliation, unwanted sexual activities and limiting access to financial resources.
- Women who experience domestic violence, and children who witness it in the home, also suffer from an array of long-term mental health and medical conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the economic burden of domestic violence in the United States is \$8 billion per year in direct medical costs and lost productivity.

Ellen R. Shaffer is the co-director of the Center for Policy Analysis in San Francisco.

Read the whole story