

Opinion: How to rethink your relationship with money

By Jane Honeck

With the new withholding tax tables announced by the IRS recently, many American families will have more money in their paychecks every week, but those dollars could disappear fast if they hold on to their old attitudes about money.

My experience is extra cash tends to disappear fast, because most people don't manage their money – they let their money manage them.

According to the Census Bureau, the median family income in the U.S. is a little over \$78,000 annually. Now, that means the 2 percent downward adjustment will put an additional \$60 in the median two-week paycheck, or \$1,560 per year, which will be gone in a heartbeat in most cases.

If people really want to make a difference in their lives this year, maybe this is a good stopping point to re-examine how we view money in our lives.

When we first encounter money, there are no instructions that come with it. We grow familiar and intimate with money and begin using it as soon as we start getting an allowance, and so we grow up thinking that we know how money works. However, when we encounter money problems in later life, try to strategize our investments, try to balance our monthly budgets or plan our retirement, the truth becomes clear: money is not so easily understood. The only way we can master it is to go back to the beginning and really think about what money really is, and examine our previously unexplored beliefs about how money works in our lives.

Here is a three-step guide to rethinking your relationship

with money.

* Ask ourselves what we think money really is – Many of us can't answer that question, because we never really thought much about money and its role in our lives. We simplify it as something we use to pay for the necessities of life, and once we use it, we have to make more. As important as money is in our lives, wouldn't it follow logically that we really should have a deeper understanding of money as it relates to our lives? The first step is examining what we think it is, and then moving forward from there.

* Talk about money – Like sex, we never learned to talk about more than the mechanics of money. Consequently, we picked up messages, interpreted them ourselves and turned them into beliefs that run our financial lives. Talking more about money, and not less, not only enhances our understanding of it, but makes us more capable of controlling it instead of allowing it to control us. It's a fact that conflicts over money are the number one cause of divorce, and this phenomenon is driven by dysfunctional communication about money. We need to learn to communicate more freely about money in order to take control.

* Create a new money philosophy – Money is not concrete or mechanical – it is a fluid force in our lives. Once we understand its role in our lives and how we view it, and we are able to talk about it, we can then begin to change it. Once we are able to see money as the slave and not the master, and work to realign our perspective on money and how our lives interact with it, we can begin setting and living by reasonable rules that put us in charge.

We focus too often on the minutiae of life, and forget that taking a look at the big picture can have such a dramatic impact on our lives. There is a vast difference between doing the monthly bills and balancing the checkbook and having a real money management philosophy. My advice isn't to simply

try to use the extra few dollars wisely, but rather, to look at the big picture, so all your dollars can make a difference in your life.

Jane Honeck is a CPA and money coach who specializes in tax and financial planning for professionals, small businesses and individuals.

Opinion: Out of joint doesn't work on the ski slopes

Publisher's note: *This first ran in the January 2011 issue of Ski magazine.*

By Peter Shelton

I had hip replacement surgery one month before my first grandchild was born.

The decision to do it, to go for the new hip, had not come easily. Back and forth I went over the previous winters: I'm too young. I can still ski. (I was 59 at the time.) I can barely walk back to the car after a morning on the slopes, but I can still do it, damn it!

Then on the other side: I'm bone-on-bone. I've seen the pictures. Yoga isn't doing the trick. I'm eating ibuprofen by the handful, day and night. That can't be good. That isn't good.

I can still sleep. Pretty well. Most nights. Except when I can't because there are no more positions to try, no way it seems to silence the ache.

But what if the new hip turns out to mean an end to skiing? It could happen. Isn't skiing, even skiing in pain, better than not skiing? I hadn't missed a season since 1957. True, I hadn't taught skiing for years, but I'd continued to write about it, dream about it, find grace in it.

One surgeon rolled his eyes when I said it was important to me to be able to keep doing this thing that was so much a part of life. I found another surgeon.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Sandoval hits some crucial points head-on

Publisher's note: *This editorial first ran Jan. 24, 2011, in the Reno Gazette-Journal.*

The first is always the most difficult, but the challenge that faced Gov. Brian Sandoval as he prepared his first State of the State address was as difficult as any new governor has faced in Nevada's history.

Sandoval was governor for just a few days past three weeks when he stepped before a joint session of the Nevada Senate and Assembly – as well as several million nervous Nevadans – on Monday evening as the leader of the state with the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

Unlike most previous governors who had the good fortune to be able to use the State of the State to propose new programs, there was no hope that there would be any good news from the always optimistic Sandoval. It's been clear for months that

whoever won the governor's office in November would have to cut the state budget; Sandoval only made the task harder with his promise not to raise taxes.

Perhaps that's why the budget he unveiled on Monday was laced with gimmicks – "monetizing" a part of the insurance premium tax, continuing to divert the room tax approved by voters for education to the general fund, shifting county funds to higher education, letting school districts use money from construction reserve accounts, and so on.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County's Hope House gives thanks

To the community,

Jeff Headrick and his team from Expert Design and Construction in Rancho Cordova recently underwrote all labor and materials to completely remodel a kitchen at a local transitional home in El Dorado County. Working with Assist Local Network out of Folsom, Expert Design reviewed project proposals from throughout the region looking for a project that would exemplify the true spirit of Christmas.

They selected Hope House, a transitional home and 18-month program for women and their children seeking self-sufficiency. Working in partnership with Green Valley Community Church and community volunteers, the program offers housing, educational, employment, counseling and numerous other resources to resident families. The Hope House Program is dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness.

Under the direction of Harry and Jennifer Headrick, Expert Design, the award-winning Rancho Cordova remodeling company, assembled a team of 26 contractors and volunteers, many from the Folsom and Sacramento region, to complete the \$30,000 project. The team designed, constructed, installed appliances, flooring, granite counter tops, plumbing fixtures, electrical wiring and beautiful cabinets and topped it all off with a beautiful paint job.

We're so grateful to Jeff and Expert Design and Construction for all that they've contributed. Hope House is now a much more functional home conducive with communal living and the project was constructed with the finest craftsmanship. More important, their team demonstrated the power of volunteerism and dedication to this very worthwhile cause.

God bless you all.

Judi McCallum, president

Shannon Bezak, executive director

Chamber thanks community for supporting food banks

To the community,

Thank you to all members of the South Shore community who attended Tahoe Chamber's Business After Hours Mixer hosted by Riva Grill last week. The event brought generous support to local food banks and demonstrated our community's dedication to South Lake Tahoe.

Cash donations amounting to \$1,500.00 were collected and have

been donated to local food banks to help feed less fortunate South Shore families and individuals this winter season.

A special thanks to Scott Craig and his staff at the Riva Grill for generously hosting this wonderful event. Over 125 people enjoyed the delicious foods and beverages offered.

Kudos to Sessions Salon, Blue Angel Café, Opal, the Fallen Angel, Bistro Danielle, 4 Seasons Soup & Salad Café, BioSpirit, ServPro, Lake Tahoe Adventures, Ski Butlers, Bethany Owens, and Hard Rock Café for their donations to the event raffle.

Once again, thank you very much to everyone who attended and helped the South Shore community start off 2011 on the right foot.

Sincerely,

Isabella Mill, Events & Communications coordinator

Opinion: Axed LTCC employee reaches out to ex-colleagues

Publisher's note: *This is an email sent by Craig Brinkman to Lake Tahoe Community College staff that was given to Lake Tahoe News by a college employee. See the Jan. 22 feature story for more insight about the issue.*

To the LTCC Classified Staff,

This is a note to say, simply, thank you for affording me the opportunity to be of service to you and students at Lake Tahoe Community College. While many of you were as uncomfortable

with change at the beginning as the Board and Administrators, you stepped up to the plate and made it happen for the past two years. In the past 20 years of project managing systems implementations, I have not worked with a more dedicated, capable or professional group of people.

The events of the past week have, I know, been difficult and troubling and the way forward may, at this point, seem unclear, but as a group you can and will, as always, get the job done on behalf of the students.

A big part of the job of the Project Manager in the process of change is to “tell it like it is”, because the failure to accept the realities of the present condemns the organization to failure in the changes that it needs to make. This is an often uncomfortable and contentious position to be in but I have long since accepted that successful change is not possible without a firm grip on reality.

The College faces significant problems because of years of the denial of reality by the Board and the Administrations, who have shoved the “tough problems” under rugs, into drawers and out of sight. As long as the facilities look okay and are clean, they must be okay ... even if we don’t spend anything on the boilers, electrical systems, ventilation systems or controls. The same has been true in telecommunications systems, information systems and, most unfortunately, in the support for classified staff. How many years has it been since the Administration said to you “we will provide you with training to ensure that you can do the best possible job for our students” and then actually delivered?

Remember that you are uniquely qualified to assist in leading the College into the future...you are the only group of people on campus who are all of the following:

Staff

Management

Instructors

Students

Taxpayers

Voters

You, more than any other group on campus, hold the future of the institution in your hands. Your experience, commitment, knowledge and actions can change the College for the better. Use your CEA to make it clear to both Administration and the Board that the small, elite group composed of some of the Administrators, Faculty and Board members who have defined the College for the past 20 years have failed you and the students. South Lake Tahoe is hurting economically, yet the College is truly isolated from this reality, offering the community little in terms of economic development, vocational training or other programs to ensure you and your fellow citizens of a bright future.

Remember at the end of the day, you are the ones who can make the difference in real change at the College, because you understand the problems, can define solutions and, most importantly, can vote. There is no more powerful tool in the toolkit of change than voting.

My best to each and every one of you,

Craig

PS: Note to the Administration – I have been saying for two years you should take the email addresses off of the College website and restrict the use of the All LTCC lists....maybe now you will. ;)

Opinion: Lake Tahoe should take some pointers from Vail

Publisher's note: *This is the second of four days of stories about issues pertaining to Vail.*

By Kathryn Reed

VAIL – After spending the first week of the year in Vail, I was left wondering what would be so bad if Lake Tahoe became the Vail of the Sierra?

It's not a simple answer because of some basic realities.

First, Lake Tahoe doesn't have comparable ski terrain to Vail. Squaw comes the closest, but it's no Vail.



Vail makes it easy to be a pedestrian.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Second, the Lake Tahoe region is so much larger, diverse and spread out than the Vail Valley.

Third, Vail the mountain was developed and then the town at the base of it. In Tahoe, most resorts sprang up after the communities were developed. This makes the village of Vail seem real. No village in Lake Tahoe seems real. They were created for tourists as some bizarre brainchild of a developer

to make money, not to create a community or true experience for the guest. Go to the villages at Heavenly, Northstar, Squaw (and Mammoth for that matter) and tell me why any local would go there. Then go to Vail or Whistler to see the difference between the world of make believe in the Sierra and world of functionality at those places.

Fourth, Vail is a company town with much of the commercial entities owned by Vail Resorts or a subsidiary of the company. Tahoe is more diverse with corporate ownership.

Vail has gone through what it calls a renaissance in the last decade. And it's not done if Ever Vail, the \$1 billion proposed development by Vail Resorts goes through.

In Lake Tahoe development is stalled – the convention center and Sierra Colina on the South Shore, Homewood on the West Shore, the Biltmore on the North Shore.

Regulations have something to do with all of that. The Vail Valley doesn't have anything like a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Better planning also led to completion of projects in Vail, including a Four Seasons opening last month. They got the players in a room, made decisions, hashed out compromises, created consensus and moved forward. It wasn't easy. Nothing worth doing ever is.

In Tahoe, decisions are made and then lawsuits are filed – and then nothing happens. In Tahoe, personal agendas take priority over what is good for the majority. Lake Tahoe recycles people who aren't professionals or the best in their field, which leaves the area mired in mediocrity.

Why would Tahoe want to be Vail?

- Vail has free bus service. It always has been. It was so incredibly convenient to use. They even have bus symbols at

the stops so people know what it is, unlike the South Shore, which has BlueGo on the signs and no symbol. What is a BlueGo?

According to Mike Rose, transportation manager for Vail, "The bus system carries 3.2 million riders per year at a cost of about \$3.2 million. The operating costs are covered by a 4 percent lift ticket tax paid to the town by Vail Associates. Capital replacement is paid for by the town general fund and a small amount of federal grants through the 5309 program.

"The bus service provides 76,000 hours of service per year within the incorporated city limits. There are six routes on the outlying and one in town shuttle. Service is every seven to 30 minutes depending on the route, time of day and season. Our longest route is East Vail at 12 miles round trip, West Vail is 10 miles, all others are in the four to five mile roundtrip range."

- Vail excels in customer service. Walking into Two Elk, the mid-mountain lodge at Vail, people hand everyone a tissue, asking them how their day is.

People say "please," "thank you," "May I help you?" "Please come back." This is the same level of service I remember from five years ago.

The bar where ski instructors hang out was every bit as friendly as Beano's Cabin, the high-end dinner restaurant at Beaver Creek. It's a level of service that is rare in Lake Tahoe.

As someone once said, "You only have one chance to make a first impression."

Good service should not be reserved for tourists. I want it as a local.

- It's walkable. Some in Vail don't like the heated sidewalks, saying a ski town should have some snow on the walkways in

winter. Maybe for ambiance that's true, but I'll take their walkways over our ice slicks any day.

- The Vail Valley dining options continue to grow, with Edwards on the far side, about 12 miles away, becoming a hot spot. Choices run the gamut from reasonable to outrageous. The diversity is astonishing.

The town of Vail has a population of about 5,000 people. South Lake Tahoe is about five times as large. But Vail's town manager, Stan Zemler , says, "The budget is equivalent to (a city the with) 25,000 to 30,000 and the staffing because it swells on any given day to those numbers."

At the end of the day, though, I don't want any part of Lake Tahoe to totally recreate itself as Vail. Lake Tahoe is special. It's one of a kind in its own way. The problem is that it is not functioning on all cylinders.

Tahoe's economy is tourism. People who say we need a second economy are blowing hot air. Tourism, people, that's our economic base. It's not going to change. Cottage industries may crop up, but they will be a distant second to tourism.

But tourist areas run the gamut. What does Tahoe want to be? What does it want to look like? Who is going to live here full time? Who is going to visit? Will they return – why or why not? Maybe we need to ask what it is we are striving for? When will enough be enough? Will we ever have enough in the bank? Is there a magic number for when we have attracted the right number of tourists?

If money is the driving force and the end goal, then becoming a destination resort with high-end lodging is a must, along with complementary restaurants and retail. If we just concentrate on the drive-up market, it is going to strain our resources with overcrowding. Vail calls them brown baggers.

If recreation is the driving force and end goal, then someone

ought to ask the U.S. Forest Service as land owner of much of the playground in the basin just how much more human traffic the terrain can handle. USFS officials have told me they are at capacity, especially in the summer. If we want more people on the lake, what does that do to the eco-system?

If a pristine lake is the goal, it's bound to bankrupt all the jurisdictions and reward the wealthy developers who can afford to implement the environmental regulations. The elephant in the room no one acknowledges is the EIP – environmental improvement program. Billions of dollars are being spent on it. For what? Lake clarity is great, but restoring the basin to pre-settlement conditions is a farce and inane goal of the powers that be. People live here. Accept it.

Vail isn't perfect, but it knows what it is and whom it wants to attract. At the end of the day, I guess I would like Lake Tahoe to be a bit more like Vail if it means knowing who we are and who we want as our customers.

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Opinion: Initiative for Calif. to secede from the United States

By Steve Kubby

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to re-examine the political bonds which have connected them to their government, and to reassume among the powers of the Earth, the separate and equal station to which

the laws of nature entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of humanity requires that they should determine whether or not there are sufficient and irreconcilable causes which shall impel them to a separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among people, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Such has been the patient sufferance of our people; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former system of government. The history of the present federal government is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over our people. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

The federal government has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. Our people are forced to pay the highest taxes in our history, plus countless fees, fines, tickets, citations, and penalties wherever they travel and whatever they do.

The federal government has passed laws censoring free speech and restricting religious freedom, in direct violation of Article I of the Bill of Rights.

The federal government has made sobriety the state religion and now jails over a half a million people a year for the "crime" of using unapproved substances to alter their consciousness.

The federal government has openly defied popular, citizen-led initiatives on drug policy reform, refusing to allow any change in their law. In complete disregard for democracy, they have used public money to campaign against these initiatives and now, having lost, threaten physicians and patients who violate their law, leaving our people no choice but to engage in civil disobedience.

The federal government has declared war against its own citizens, if they so much as possess certain unapproved plants, bringing to bear the fearful might of its military and over one hundred different federal agencies empowered to use deadly force against our people.

The federal government has suspended our constitutional right to be secure in our persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, allowing police to search and seize whatever they wish, so long as they are acting on "good faith" that a crime has taken place or that evidence is being destroyed.

The federal government has authorized police to seize private property, without due cause or compensation or even filing

charges, directly violating Article IV of the Bill of Rights.

The federal government has charged, convicted and jailed citizens who have already served sentences for identical state crimes, in direct violation of Article V which forbids such "double jeopardy."

The federal government has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing to inform Juries of their right to vote their conscience, or to allow Juries to exercise their constitutional right to judge not only the accused, but to judge the soundness of the law itself.

The federal government has made judges dependent on its Will alone, ordering judges to make their decisions based upon "mandatory minimum sentences," thereby violating the separation of powers between the judicial, executive and legislative branches, which is so fundamental to our form of democracy.

The federal government has emptied our Treasury, creating so vast a debt, that forty percent of the personal taxes collected by the government must be paid just on the interest.

The federal government has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies of secret police, narcs, undercover agents, and paid informants, to spy upon and to coerce our people into obeying drug laws which are based upon puritanical beliefs that defy common sense.

The federal government has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power of local communities who are regularly subjected to aerial assaults by heavily armed drug agents. Our people are powerless to stop or in anyway protect themselves from repeated violations of their human rights and private property. Military raids now occur throughout our land against anyone who dares to grow Hemp, even though our Founding Fathers, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both grew and praised this remarkable plant.

The federal government has made a mockery of the election process, staging contrived political conventions which have already been bought and paid for by special interests, under the burden of a corrupt system that offers little choice on election day.

The federal government no longer serves the will of the People and has become a cancer, unable to stop growing and unable to stop spending, stealing from the future with massive debts that will take generations to repay.

The federal government has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction which is in direct violation of our Constitution and in direct violation of our Bill of Rights; giving the false appearance of public assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For protecting Agents of the DEA, FBI, CIA, and BATF by mock trials from punishment for murders which they committed on the Inhabitants of these states:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent and empowered a terrorist organization, the IRS, to obtain our compliance though coercion:

For squandering our public funds on exotic weapons and foreign wars, often to keep dictators in power and defense contractors employed, while our children go hungry, our Schools are neglected and our cities decay.

For depriving us in many cases of the benefits of trial by Jury:

For imprisoning millions of otherwise law-abiding citizens for the pretended offenses of commerce in psychoactive plants:

For abolishing the free system of Tort laws, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its powers far beyond the scope granted to it by the Constitution, and in

direct violation of Articles IX and X of the Bill of Rights:

For taking away our independence as sovereign citizens, abolishing our most valuable laws and altering fundamentally our form of government, demanding blind obedience to the failed policies of the past:

For suspending our own right to govern our bodies and our consciousness, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

For spraying poisons on our Hemp crops with the evil intention of doing great harm to our people who wish to use this natural herb for their medical relief or personal enjoyment.

For trafficking in cocaine and armaments as instruments of foreign policy, violating not only our Constitution, but the very trust which our People have placed their federal government.

For creating a climate of fear, intimidation and misery in order to obscure the failure of The federal government to address to real problems of poverty, violent crime, racism, pollution, and AIDS which now threaten the health and safety of our citizens.

For fouling the air, poisoning the soil, clear-cutting our forests, and contaminating our water, all for the economic gain of a privileged few.

For knowingly releasing radioactive and toxic wastes upon our people, resulting in an epidemic of cancer, birth defects and causing untold pain and suffering.

The federal government has abdicated government here by declaring us out of its protection and waging war against us.

The federal government has plundered our private property, invaded and seized our homes on the slightest of evidence, and destroyed the lives of our People, broken apart loving

families, all in the name of a "War on Drugs."

The federal government is at this time militarizing the "War on Drugs," to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy a civilized nation.

The federal government has constrained our fellow citizens to become the informants and executioners of their friends and brethren, or to incriminate themselves through the widespread use of urine testing.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated petitions to reduce or eliminate the cruel and unusual punishments for the use of drugs, to practice our own religious beliefs, including the sacred use of sacramental plants, and our right to use whatever medicines we wish have been answered only by repeated injury and acts of violence upon our people. A government, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our federal officials.

We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their congress to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us.

We have reminded them of their oath of office, "To uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity to end this war on our own People and to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably bring about our downfall as a democratic society.

They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of

consanguinity. All efforts to obtain justice for those persecuted for hemp crimes has been met with determined resistance to change. Even democratically passed initiatives have not altered their blind opposition to change. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, friends in peace.

Faced with such overwhelming and unresponsive tyranny, the people of California hereby authorize and demand that their state government officially secede from the United States, as provide for by the Ninth and Tenth Amendments of the Bill of Rights. In those amendments, the rights and powers not specifically granted to the federal government and not forbidden by the Constitution are reserved for the states and the people. We claim secession as a natural right of our people and as a constitutional right of our state.

We, therefore, the sovereign citizens of the free and independent California Republic, voting as a free people in a free election, appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of California, solemnly publish and declare.

That the California Republic be, and of right ought to be free and Independent; that citizens of the California Republic are absolved from all allegiance to The federal government, and that all political connection between them and The federal government is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent Republic, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do.

Furthermore, no citizen of the California Republic shall be required to pay any tax to the federal government, nor shall they be indebted, in any way for the financial liabilities of

the federal government.

Upon the successful passage of this initiative, the federal government will have one year to vacate all lands, bases, and property within the Republic. Recognizing the hardship and financial burden this will place upon The federal government, the California Republic is hereby authorized to spend up to one trillion dollars to compensate The federal government, so long as the transition remains peaceful.

All tax rates and fees within the California Republic shall be frozen as of the date this initiative passes. Under no circumstances can the Republic increase fees, increase taxes, or add any new taxes or fees.

In all criminal cases, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, otherwise known as the original Bill of Rights, shall prevail. No exceptions or limitations to the Bill of Rights shall be accepted. Rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights shall not be infringed. Whenever police or prosecutors can be shown to be withholding information, providing false testimony or otherwise engaging in actions which violate the Bill of Rights, the case in question shall be automatically dismissed.

The passage of this voter initiative commits the California Republic to restoring our democratic freedoms and deprived of any weapon except the truth, can only represent themselves as patriotic citizens committed to resisting all laws which violate the Constitution and bringing to justice, all agents of The federal government, who use their office to commit crimes against our people.

And for the support of this voter Declaration of Independence, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Steve Kubby is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: Civility starts with Congress

By Jackie Speier

The news that Rep. Gabrielle Giffords had been shot in the head hit me in the stomach – complete nausea. My grief over a fallen colleague and those who died in the gun assault brought back the sensations of a jungle runway 32 years ago, when I lay in a pool of my own blood, covered with ants, expecting to die.

I pray that Giffords will be able to read this soon or that I might have the chance to read it to her. I have much to say.

As a legal aide to Rep. Leo Ryan, D-San Mateo, in 1978, I held idealistic thoughts of what could be done in the name of justice. In November 1978, I joined Ryan on a fact-finding mission to Jonestown, Guyana. We were responding to rumors – ultimately determined to be fact – that relatives of the congressman's Bay Area constituents were being held against their will by a cult leader, the Rev. Jim Jones. Many members of Jones' Peoples Temple wanted to return with us to the United States. The outcome has been well documented in news accounts, books and movies. We were about to board our plane back home when a truck full of Jones' gunmen burst through the thick jungle cover. Shots rang out. I hid behind the wheel of the plane and played dead. Someone shot me five times at point-blank range.

I called the congressman's name. There was no answer. Later I was told he had been riddled with 45 bullets.

My next life started during those 22 hours on my back on the

runway, unable to move and barely able to think of anything other than this was how my dreams were to end at the age of 28.

Jackie Speier represents San Mateo County and portions of San Francisco in the House of Representatives.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Ignore education at our own peril

By Robert Reich

Over the long term, the only way we're going to raise wages, grow the economy and improve American competitiveness is by investing in our people – especially their educations.

Yet we're falling behind. In a recent survey of 34 advanced nations by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, our kids came in 25th in math, 17th in science and 14th in reading. The average 15-year-old American student can't answer as many test questions correctly as the average 15-year-old student in Shanghai.

I'm not one of those who believe the only way to fix what's wrong with American education is to throw more money at it. We also need to do it much better. Teacher performance has to be squarely on the table. We should experiment with vouchers whose worth is inversely related to family income. Universities have to tame their budgets for student amenities that have nothing to do with education.

But considering the increases in our population of young

people and their educational needs, and the challenges posed by the new global economy, more resources are surely needed.

Robert Reich, former U.S. secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at UC Berkeley and the author of the new book "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future." He blogs at www.robertreich.org.

Read the whole story