

D'Agostini thanks supporters, ready to be sheriff

To the community,

It's official. The election was certified and we won.

There are no words to adequately thank you for making this campaign a success, however, every day I serve as your sheriff, I commit to work hard for the citizens of El Dorado County. I could not have accomplished this monumental task without the hard work, dedication and support from all of you. This was truly a community effort. My hope is that you will stay involved in serving. Just think of the great things we can accomplish in our county.

Janine and I have made many new friends, strengthened old relationships and look forward to new doors opening within our community. The journey has been long and hard fought and an experience we will always cherish.

Since the day after the election, I've been working with the current administration at our sheriff's office getting up to speed on budget, personnel and other important transitional topics.

In the near future, look forward to another email letting everyone know when and where I will be sworn in as sheriff of El Dorado County.

Again, thank you all for everything and for keeping the faith.

John D'Agostini, El Dorado County sheriff-elect

Opinion: How to live with climate change

By Bjorn Lomborg

One of the scarier predictions about global warming is the suggestion that melting glaciers and ice caps could cause sea levels to rise as much as 15 to 20 feet over the next century. Set aside the fact that the best research we have – from the United Nations climate panel – says that global sea levels are not likely to rise more than about 20 inches by 2100. Rather, let's imagine that over the next 80 or 90 years, a giant port city – say, Tokyo – found itself engulfed by a sea-level rise of about 15 feet. Millions of inhabitants would be imperiled, along with trillions of dollars' worth of infrastructure. Without a vast global effort, could we cope with such a terrifying catastrophe? Well, we already have. In fact, we're doing it right now.

Since 1930, excessive ground water withdrawal has caused Tokyo to subside by as much as 15 feet. Similar subsidence has occurred over the past century in numerous cities, including Tianjin, Shanghai, Osaka, Bangkok and Jakarta. And in each case, the city has managed to protect itself from such large relative sea-level rises without much difficulty.

The process is called adaptation, and it's something we humans are very good at. That isn't surprising, since we've been doing it for millennia. As climate economist Richard Tol notes, our ability to adapt to widely varying climates explains how people live happily at both the equator and the poles. In the debate over global warming, in which some have argued that civilization as we know it is at stake, this is an important point. Humankind is not completely at the mercy of nature. To the contrary, when it comes to dealing with the impact of climate change, we've compiled a pretty impressive

track record. While this doesn't mean we can afford to ignore climate change, it provides a powerful reason not to panic about it either.

Bjorn Lomborg is head of the Copenhagen Consensus Center and an adjunct professor at Copenhagen Business School. He is the author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist" and "Cool It" and the subject of the movie "Cool It."

Read the whole story

Giving thanks today and throughout the year

Thanksgiving is about people, more than a plate of food – at least that's what it should be about.

It's a time to come together, to break bread (yes), but more important, to say thanks. Look around at all you have, not what you don't have or wish you had. Life isn't about keeping score. It's not about the best wine served with dinner, the biggest bird, the most number of pies. It's not even about the biggest celebration. And it certainly isn't about football.



For those of us in Tahoe it's not about the bountiful harvest (though one could make the argument the snowfall is our harvest).

What if it's not a good snow year or the people don't come? What would you be thankful for then?

We tend to forget that happiness is not measured by what is in one's bank account. Truly rich people have an abundance of friends. That, friend, is something to be thankful for.

Thanksgiving is that day we in the United States tend to overindulge. Maybe it's really a metaphor for how we live our lives. Most take it for granted and celebrate having a four-day weekend. Yes, that is something to be thankful for. But if it's that big of a deal to have time off from work to spend with family and friends, perhaps re-evaluating your priorities is in order.

Take a moment to look around today. Who are you choosing to spend it with – alone, with family, with friends? Think about those who don't have a choice – shut-ins, hospitalized, no longer able to travel.

Yes, it's been a tough couple of years for most people. But we're here. We've survived. That, alone, is worth being thankful for.

For some, there will be an empty chair at the Thanksgiving dinner table. But that is no reason not to be thankful. Be thankful for the time that special person was in your life and for the memories that will always be there.

Be thankful today – and carry that sentiment forward for the next 364 days until we all gather again.

Happy Thanksgiving from *Lake Tahoe News*.

Message from South Tahoe real

estate president

By Theresa Souers

Members of the South Tahoe Association of Realtors leadership team attended the October business meetings for the California Association of Realtors in Anaheim. In attendance were Amanda Adams and Ken Daley from Re/Max Realty Today, Jill Teakell from Century 21 At Tahoe Paradise, Deb Howard of Deb Howard & Co, myself representing Pinnacle Real Estate Group of Lake Tahoe and Sharon Kerrigan, EVP for STAR.

Among the many topics of discussion was the projected market forecast for the state of California in 2011. A few key points showed that while a weaker-than expected economic recovery will most likely result in a decline of California home sales for 2010, throughout the state, economists say that we should be seeing small increases in both home sales and median prices in 2011.

After two consecutive years of record-setting price declines, the median home price in California is expected to climb 11.5 percent in 2010 to \$306,500 and increase another 2 percent in 2011 to \$312,500, according to the forecast. It was also pointed out that distressed properties will figure prominently in the market again next year, but we can also expect to see discretionary sellers play a larger role. At the same time, the economic team pointed out that the unknown factors that could impact the market are the strength of the economic recovery, federal housing policies and the actions of underwater homeowners.

These meetings held three times a year provide local leadership the opportunity to learn firsthand about anticipated real estate trends, news, advances and changes in contractual documents, and allows them to voice their opinions on legislative bills related to property homeowners rights.

When asked what they felt were highlights of the week's activities, Daley commented, "I continue to be fascinated by the process and inner workings of the California Association of Realtors. Especially the political aspect."

Teakell went on to add, "As we reviewed new California laws for 2011, one particular bill (SB 931) stood out. Starting January 1st, a seller's first trust deed lender cannot obtain a deficiency judgment against the seller after a short sale. Providing written consent to a short sale shall obligate the first trust deed lender to accept the sales proceeds as full payment and discharge of the remaining amount owed on the loan. Unfortunately, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed SB1178, which would have extended California's anti-deficiency protection to refinance loans."

Our everyday lives are dramatically affected by a dedicated team working behind the scenes to achieve common goals, all in the best interest of the organization they represent.

Adams added, "Now is the time when we can make a real difference that can affect many people. We were told that when times are rough, (like they are now) the best of us stand up to make things happen and to help out. Professional education provides us access to ways to assist our clients through their hardships, such as losing a home to foreclosure, and guide our buyers through the time consuming short sale and REO purchase procedure."

The most recent statistics provided by the South Tahoe Association of Realtors Multiple Listing Service is showing some encouraging news. Following the method used by both the National Association of Realtors and the California Association of Realtors, STAR provides a median home price based upon the average of the previous twelve months, or a rolling average. That number is compared to the previous year at the same time.

Based on these numbers, as of Oct. 31, the median home price was posted at \$326,500 for single-family residences.

While still much lower than the peak of 2006 (\$489,000), the good news is that it is slightly up by approximately 2 percent from October 2009, and represents a steady pattern (with the exception of a slight drop in August) of gentle increases during the past nine months. Another positive note is that as between Nov. 1, 2009, and Oct. 31, 2010, there were 520 closed escrows. This was quite an improvement over the 407 for the same period the previous year.

Of course there are a variety of factors that are playing a role in this increased activity, but we will take them all. This data is available for the public to reviewed at www.STAOR.org, under statistics.

Theresa Souers is president of South Tahoe Association of Realtors.

Putting perspective on holiday shopping

By Lou Scatigna

Boy, how time flies when the economy is in the toilet.

With Black Friday upon us, the tension of the holiday shopping season is here – and consumers with low confidence and retailers with low expectations will soon begin limping into the happiest time of the year.

But it doesn't have to be that way..

The holidays can either be the happiest time of the year or the most stressful time of the year. The truth is, it can be easier. We all have high expectations for ourselves when the holidays come around, but by simply taking a step back to look at our situations realistically, we can actually plan a joyous holiday without taking ourselves to the poorhouse to do it.

My ideas on holiday budget planning can help save consumers grief:

- * Honestly evaluate your current financial situation and determine how much you can spend without going into significant debt;
- * Decide the maximum amount of spending that will be done on credit cards;
- * Discuss with your children that during tough times, holiday expenses will be lower than when are good;
- * Start shopping now. This will give you the time to search for sales and bargains, many retailers have already discounted prices. Another reason to start now is you will wind up using more cash and less credit cards because your spreading your buying over several weeks instead of three or four;
- * Use the Internet. Great bargains can be found because online stores don't have the traditional brick and mortar overhead of retail stores. Also, it helps you beat the crowds, the parking and the long checkout lines;
- * Instead of buying three or four expensive gifts, buy a larger number of inexpensive ones;
- * Start a holiday club bank account so next year you will have the cash saved;
- * Restrict gift buying to your immediate family. Those nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles can add up, I'm sure they will understand, because they are likely doing the same thing.

By simply expecting less of ourselves – and teaching our families to accept those limitations – not only are we teaching them valuable lessons about how to manage money, but we are also reducing the stress of the season so everyone can enjoy themselves. Because, at the end of the day, holiday presents are just things. The time we spend with our families during the holidays, however, is the true gift of the season.

Louis Scatigna is a financial advisor and a licensed investment broker and since 1987 a tax accountant.

Opinion: LT Restoration Act must be approved to help Tahoe

By Dianne Feinstein

Anyone doubting that climate change poses a severe threat to Lake Tahoe should read an alarming new report by the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center.

It was written for the U.S. Forest Service by scientists who have devoted their professional careers to studying Lake Tahoe. And it paints a distinctly bleak picture of the future for the Jewel of the Sierra.

Among its findings: The Tahoe basin's regional snowpack could decline by as much as 60 percent in the next century, with increased floods likely by 2050 and prolonged droughts by 2100.



Dianne
Feinstein

Even “under the most optimistic projections,” average snowpack in the Sierra Nevada around Tahoe will decline by 40 to 60 percent by 2100, according to the report.

This would likely bankrupt Tahoe’s ski industry, threaten the water supply of Reno and other communities and degrade the lake’s fabled water clarity. It is devastating.

That’s why it’s vital for the U.S. Senate to pass the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2010, which I co-sponsored with Sens. Harry Reid, D-Nev.; Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. and John Ensign, R-Nev.

This legislation would authorize a broad array of programs to mount an aggressive attack on the many threats facing Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe basin, including invasive species, wildfires and pollution and sedimentation.

According to the UC Davis report, an all-out attack on pollution and sedimentation may be the lake’s last best hope.

Geoff Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and one of the report’s authors, noted the need to restore short-term water quality in Lake Tahoe – while there’s still time to do it.

“Reducing the load of external nutrients entering the lake in the coming decades may be the only possible mitigation measure to reduce the impact of climate change on lake clarity,” the report said.

Without such an effort, the “internal loading of nutrients” could fundamentally change the lake and fuel algal growth, creating a downward spiral in water quality and clarity.

Water clarity is one of the central problems the legislation would address.

Pollution and sedimentation have threatened Lake Tahoe’s water clarity for years. In 1968, the first year UC Davis scientists made measurements using a device called a Secchi disk, clarity was measured at an average depth of 102.4 feet. Clarity declined over the next three decades, hitting a low of 64 feet in 1997.

There has been some improvement in this decade. This year scientists recorded average clarity at 69.6 feet – roughly within the range of the past eight years. But it is a fragile gain.

Climate change has already made itself apparent at Lake Tahoe. It makes the basin dry and tinder-hot, raising the risks of catastrophic wildfire. Daily air temperatures have increased 4 degrees since 1911. Snow has declined as a fraction of total precipitation, from an average of 52 percent in 1910 to just 34 percent in recent years.

And climate change has caused Lake Tahoe’s water temperature to rise 1.5 degrees in 38 years. That means the cyclical deep-water mixing of the lake’s waters will occur less frequently, and this could significantly disrupt Lake Tahoe’s ecosystem.

Specifically, the legislation would authorize the highest-priority restoration projects. These would include stormwater management and watershed restoration projects scientifically determined to be the most effective ways to improve water clarity.

It also would authorize projects to reduce the threat of wildfire at Lake Tahoe. Wildfires not only destroy the forest

and threaten lives, they send ash into the streams that feed into Lake Tahoe, further degrading water clarity.

It would also authorize programs to attack invasive species such as quagga mussels and Asian clams. Just one quagga mussel can lay 1 million eggs, and an infestation could destroy the lake's biology and the local economy.

This legislation would build upon the gains established under the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2000. This earlier law set in motion a partnership among the federal government, the states of California and Nevada, local governments and organizations, and the private sector.

It financed more than 300 projects under the Environmental Improvement Program, with another 183 projects under way.

These programs led to reversals in the slide in water clarity and a reduction in hazardous fuels. The dead, dying and downed trees that fuel wildfires have been treated on 33,549 acres, including 12,256 acres since 2006.

A lot of good work has been done. But this newest report from UC Davis makes it plain as day: There's a lot more work to do, and time is running out.

Dianne Feinstein is the senior U.S. senator from California.

Opinion: Legislators' junket proves it's business as usual

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Nov. 18, 2010, Sacramento Bee.*

More than 20 legislators led by Speaker John A. Pérez are in Maui, courtesy of interest groups and lobbyists who soon will be seeking their votes on legislation.

As the *Bee's* Jim Sanders reported on Wednesday, some and perhaps all of the Assembly members and senators are accepting airfare and lodging paid for by a nonprofit corporation called California Independent Voter Project. The article raises an issue that the newly aggressive Fair Political Practices Commission ought to confront.

The California Independent Voter Project is a brainchild of Steve Peace, a former assemblyman, senator and director of the California Department of Finance. Because he established his group as a nonprofit, Peace is under no obligation to identify the donors who are footing the bill, or how much they are contributing.

Other nonprofits also sponsor junkets without disclosing who pays. The FPPC should find a way to remove this blind spot from the law, and adopt rules that would require that nonprofit corporations disclose donors who pay for such junkets.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Ensign's days are likely numbered

By Jon Ralston, Las Vegas Sun

Suffering from the enervating ennui of postelection depression, I always find there is only one cure: Look ahead

to the next one.

No, I don't mean the yawnfest to succeed Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman – assuming he doesn't barricade himself in his office (lifetime supply of Bombay Sapphire therein) to stay longer. I refer to Campaign 2012, which officially began one week ago, with Republicans salivating to build on legislative gains here and everywhere, and Democrats trying to find a way to hold off the GOP without the vote magnet named Harry Reid on the ballot. And before the campaign matrix sorts itself out, we have to endure a bloodbath unlike any Sam Peckinpah could have imagined – and it always seems to move in slow motion! – known as Session '11, which could reshape the conventional wisdom I am about to dispense.

Rarely does a cycle approach with the number of cascading triggers as does the one that just began, with the first one at the top. Nevada's junior senator, John Ensign, may not know it, but he is a walking political corpse, soon to be indicted or willingly or forcibly retired.

His fate is inextricably linked to that of several other Nevada politicians, whose ambition or lack thereof could dramatically alter the levers of power in the state – or not.

I have to believe Ensign will soon become a target of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Why? Because the GOP sees a path to taking the Senate in 2012 – two-thirds of the contested seats are held by Democrats – and they don't want to have to worry about defending their own. Ensign has a disapproval rating approaching Harry Reid-like elevation and he will have neither the benefit of a Reid-like turnout machine or campaign team. Those who know him or have been with him before want nothing to do with him now. Even in Nevada, where the dead are resurrected and no depredation seems unforgivable, Ensign has no path to victory.

Read the whole story

November is National Novel Writing Month

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Nov. 13, 2010, New York Times.*

November is National Novel Writing Month. Perhaps you know that already. Perhaps you're trying to reach word 23,338 by night's end. If you don't know NaNoWriMo, think of it as a literary marathon with nearly 200,000 mostly amateur writers. The goal? To write a 50,000-word "novel" in 30 days.

"Novel," in NaNoWriMo-speak, means "laughably awful yet lengthy prose." What began in 1999 with 21 friends has grown into a nonprofit called the Office of Letters and Light, whose purpose is to get people to throw their literary inhibitions aside, work within a communal deadline, and have fun.

This enormous coterie of writers had produced nearly a billion words as of a couple of days ago. (In 2009, the total was nearly 2.5 billion.) At the end of the month, writers upload their work for a word count. Last year, slightly more than 19 percent of NaNoWriMo writers won, which proves just how hard it is to keep up a pace of 1,667 words a day, even if they're laughably awful.

Read the whole story

Sex offender parking near Heavenly's main lodge

To the community,

There has been a van parked on Saddle Road between the California Main Lodge and Wildwood Avenue in a deserted construction site. The California license plate is 2F28754.

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department has notified Heavenly that the owner is a registered sex offender who preys on young women.

The Police Department has demanded that the individual move from the area. The van was removed from the site Thursday night.

With this individual's close proximity to the Main Lodge, please alert your staff to remain extra vigilant while walking to and from the parking lot after work and in the early morning hours.

Karen S. Foster, Heavenly Mountain Resort Health & Safety manager