

# Opinion: The great tax debate that wasn't

By Jim Toedtman

At midnight this New Year's Eve, unless Congress intervenes, the U.S. tax code does a reverse somersault, upending a decade of tax law and reverting to its alignment of 2001, a tax hike costing \$4 trillion over 10 years.

The unyielding calendar dictates that Congress must act quickly. That is an irresponsible option and a wasted opportunity for the nation.

It means a \$4 trillion decision after a debate that hasn't been worth two cents.

What should have been a thoughtful discussion of what we want government to do, followed by selecting the best, most efficient and equitable ways to pay for it, has instead been reduced to a bumper sticker war of words: "Bush tax cuts: keep 'em or kill 'em."

Our tax code barely reflects the 21st-century world. Instead, vast changes have been accommodated by piecemeal patches and tweaks and an ever-growing list of tax breaks and loopholes that now total \$1 trillion a year.

*Jim Toedtman is editor of AARP.*

**Read the whole story**

---

# Veterans deserve recognition for all they do, have done

A society ought to be judged on how it treats its young, its seniors and its veterans.

Every year South Lake Tahoe honors its veterans on Nov. 11 – much like what is going on elsewhere in the country on this Veterans Day. For this, we should be proud as a community.



The ceremony is on Highway 50 at the American Legion at 11am – so stop by or honk as you pass by.

Unfortunately, though, it's one of those traditions that seems to draw the same familiar faces. Yes, this is a workday for many. Still, others aren't into things like this. But think about the time these men and women have given to protecting our country. Don't they deserve 30 or 60 minutes of your time?

No matter the reason you won't attend this or some other celebration honoring all the men and women who have served in the Armed Services, pause for a moment. Think about what it would be like if this all volunteer military were not there.

What if you had to serve a year or two? Many countries make it a mandate. Could you handle it? How would it affect your life? Your outlook on the world?

For a moment forget about the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Forget about the past – the Vietnams, World Wars and other battles.

Veterans Day isn't about being pro military or anti-military,

it's not about being for or against any war. It's not about thinking the United States should play big brother to the rest of the world or not.

It's about people. It's about people willing to do the work most of us would never want to do, let alone be capable of doing.

The Coast Guard churns the waters of Lake Tahoe. National Guard units are in Reno and Sacramento. Fallon Naval Air Station is to the east of Tahoe, while Travis Air Force Base is to the west.

Our law enforcement units are filled with men and women who have served in the military.

Men and women in uniform surround us.

Next time you see one of them, say thank you.

---

## Opinion: Prop. 26 will change Sacramento gridlock

**Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Nov. 4, 2010, Los Angeles Times.***

California voters have given the majority party the power to adopt a state budget on a majority vote. But in passing Prop. 26, they have stripped the same lawmakers of one of their chief budget-balancing tools.

Were California voters especially wise Tuesday when they adopted both Proposition 25, which erases the Legislature's crippling two-thirds vote requirement for adopting a budget,

and Proposition 26, which imposes a new two-thirds mandate for imposing or raising a fee? End the gridlock, perhaps they were saying, but not at the expense of taxpaying families or businesses.

Or were they being especially clueless, telling Democratic lawmakers to adopt the budget they want, but without knowing or caring that they were simultaneously making the job close to impossible by depriving those same politicians of one of their chief budget-balancing tools?

It's tempting but in the end pointless to try to find a consistent voter philosophy among the confusing and often contradictory ballot measures. The electorate's role is to say "yes" or "no" to individual questions; it's up to their elected leaders and representatives to make those decisions work. In the coming year, lawmakers and the once-and-future Gov. Jerry Brown will be presented with an opportunity in Proposition 25, the majority-vote budget, possibly the most important reform adopted at the ballot box in a generation. They will have to demonstrate wisdom, leadership and self-restraint to take good advantage of it without being snared by Proposition 26 and the other ballot-box budgeting mandates sent them by voters in this election and others over the last 30 years.

**Read the whole story**

---

## **Lakeview Commons looks better without orange fences**

South Lake Tahoe City Councilman-elect Tom Davis and *Lake Tahoe News* Publisher Kathryn Reed were having a casual

conversation last week about the orange fencing around trees at Lakeview Commons – and why it's there when a chain link fence keeps people out of the dormant construction zone.

Shortly thereafter Davis spoke to City Manager Tony O'Rourke and City Attorney Patrick Enright about the unsightly orange fencing.



Orange fencing  
at Lakeview  
Commons is  
gone.

Photo/Kathryn  
Reed

The orange is gone.

Though this is just a small gesture, it's one that was acted upon quickly, decisively and makes one of the central areas of South Lake Tahoe look much better.

*Lake Tahoe News* says thank you to everyone involved and hopes many more beneficial acts – small and large – are in store for the South Shore in the immediate future.

– *Lake Tahoe News*

---

# Opinion: Needing to find another plan for state parks

**Publisher's note:** *This editorial is from the Nov. 7, 2010, Sacramento Bee.*

What next for California's struggling state parks system?

Fifty-eight percent of California voters Tuesday roundly rejected an initiative asking residents to pay an \$18 surcharge on their cars each year in exchange for free access to state parks.

Incoming Gov. Jerry Brown and lawmakers should not take Tuesday's vote as a statement on the value Californians place on their state parks. From redwoods to sea coast to mountains to historic sites, state parks draw 80 million visitors each year.

Yet state budget problems remain and Californians still feeling the bite of the economic downturn have signaled that they don't want new fees. What's needed now is bold vision by Brown and the Legislature, and a variety of old and new strategies. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's repeated threat to eliminate all general fund support for state parks is a non-starter.

Some have suggested raising park entrance fees to offset general fund cuts. This was tried four times in the past decade, and attendance declined. Caution should prevail. We don't want to price people out of their state parks.

**Read the whole story**

---

# Ways to help with runaway issues in Tahoe

By Nick Behney and Cheyanne Lane

What are the first thoughts that go through your mind when you see a youth on the streets? How did they get there, where are their parents, and are they safe? It's disturbing to realize that between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away annually. That's each year.



Most youth who run away do so because of threatening environments at home, such as physical/verbal abuse, substance abuse issues, questions of sexual orientation, or escaping state care. Unfortunately, by choosing to run away, they further subject themselves to threatening situations that impede their progress in life.

Youth who have chosen to run away are at an elevated risk of pregnancy, suicide attempts, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and participating in criminal activity.

November is National Runaway Prevention Month. It's a public education campaign coordinated between Tahoe Youth & Family Services, the National Runaway Switch Board, California Coalition for Youth, and other services agencies across the nation. The goal of National Runaway Prevention Month is to increase awareness of the issues surrounding youth who have run away, and help find ways to prevent youth from running away.

The best methods to avoid having our youth run away are first being aware of the causes, and then working on preventing youth from feeling like running away is their only choice.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services' Drop In Center is an excellent resource for youth who have run away, are homeless, throwaway or couch surfing. At the Drop-In Center, the staff can assist youth with food, clothing, socks, hygiene supplies, laundry services, showers, help looking for a job or filling out an application, obtaining proper identification, or we can simply be there to listen, which oftentimes is the most important part.

For more information about the resources, what the Drop In Center provides, or how to can help runaway youth in our community, contact Tahoe Youth & Family Services, South Lake Tahoe office at (530) 541.2445, or in Gardnerville at (775) 782.4202. The Drop-In Center in South Lake Tahoe is open from 1-5pm Tuesday through Friday and 1-7pm on Saturdays. The Gardnerville Ranchos Drop In center is open Tuesday-Friday 3-7pm and 2-7pm on Saturdays. Both Drop-In centers are closed Sunday and Monday. Tahoe Youth & Family Services' 24-hour crisis number is 800.870.8937.

*Nick Behney and Cheyanne Lane work for Tahoe Youth & Family Services.*

---

## **Opinion:      Distorted      facts continue**

**To the community,**

The ecological impact of the Upper Truckee Restoration Project is too critical to allow misleading statistics to sway public opinion. But distorted facts continue to headline State Parks' campaign to promote Alternative 2 as the "only viable" choice.



As reported in the article “TRPA Gets Earful on River Project at Golf Course, State Park” (Oct. 30 *Lake Tahoe News*), much of the logic of Alternative 2 – which would expand the golf course into Washoe Meadows – stems from the assumption that Lake Tahoe Golf Course is “among the top five revenue makers of California State Parks.”

However, the Parks’ own “System Statistical Reports” (available on the Parks website) clearly disproves this claim by ranking the golf course (Lake Valley State Recreation Area) as 46th among the highest income-producing Park system properties. Moreover, the report shows that income from the golf course is only about half of 1 percent of the system’s \$80 million annual field revenue.

A study of several reports reveals that the backers of Alternative 2 are using statistical sleight-of-hand to promote their view and that they do not want transparency and candor.

We all are united in the quest to restore the stretch of the Upper Truckee that was sacrificed years ago for the development of Lake Tahoe Golf Course.

Let’s not sacrifice another natural resource, Washoe Meadows State Park, by allowing a project which is being justified by data that won’t hold up to public scrutiny. Restore the River and save Washoe Meadows State Park by advocating alternative 3 or 5.

**Lynne Paulson, Meyers**

---

# Howell thanks campaign supporters

## A message to Douglas County,

I would like to say thank you to all of those who supported and helped during my campaign to be elected county commissioner. Many displayed signs at their homes and businesses, wrote letters of support, folded brochures, made phone calls, talked to friends and neighbors, opened their homes for meet and greets, and donated financially.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to run for an office that I believe has a greater influence on the direction of our community than any other elected official. When the campaign started I said I did not want to get to Nov. 2 and wish I had done more. Well, I am proud to say that during the last nine months we did what we said we would. We ran a campaign focused on the "issues" and what I, as your commissioner, would bring to Douglas County instead of focusing on my opponent.

A special thank you to my wife, Heather, and my sons, Ben and Griffin, for putting up with me being away from home when I was out meeting voters at debates, at meet the candidate nights, at community meetings, and going door to door in Topaz Ranch Estates, Carson Valley and Lake Tahoe.

Although I will not be the next District 4 commissioner, I will continue to serve my community and country where and when I am needed. I have great respect for the election process and therefore respect the decision made by the voters. My passion to be involved in and lead our community in a positive direction has not been extinguished; if possible ... it burns stronger than before.

Sincerely,

# **El Dorado County Food Bank looking for help**

**California Food Bank Executive Directors,**

I need your help. El Dorado County is currently going through some painful budget cuts and senior nutrition sites are in danger of elimination. In the past I have talked to Food Bank Representatives that partner with their county to provide service through the Senior Nutrition Program. I am trying to provide some options and models of nonprofits throughout the state to Human Services and the Board of Supervisors to try and save these important outreach programs.

I need your help, if any of you work with your local area agency on aging or you know another nonprofit in your service area that provides this service please contact me or send me some information on who I can contact. These seniors need our help, please join me together we may be able to help El Dorado County save a crucial program that many seniors rely on.

**Mike Sproull, founder Food Bank of El Dorado Count7 (530) 621.9950, [mikes@foodbankedc.org](mailto:mikes@foodbankedc.org)**

---

# Opinion: Cuts to senior meals unacceptable

Dear Supervisors,

Last week, the CAO proposed budget cuts to senior programs that we believe would have a grave, negative impact on the quality of life for the some of the most vulnerable citizens in our community.

Eliminating nutrition sites would increase the likelihood of inadequate or improper diet and would put seniors at an even greater risk of poor health. For some seniors, the meal they receive at the nutrition program is the only meal they will eat that day.

Senior nutrition sites offer more than just a healthy meal. Many seniors live alone and would live a life of isolation if not for the opportunity to come together with their peers over lunch. The value of this social contact should not be underestimated.

Attendance at the food program also gives the program coordinators and volunteers an opportunity to observe any signs of change or poor health in an individual. Staff can then engage the person of concern in appropriate resources prior to need for more extensive intervention.

Our seniors are greatly valued by all of us here on the South Shore, as they should be in the entire county, state and country. Please use your considerable power and unite to protect these treasured members of our community.

Sincerely,

**David Kelly, chairman Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled**