

Opinion: A political-economic perfect storm

By Robert Reich

It's a perfect storm. And I'm not talking about the dangers facing Democrats. I'm talking about the dangers facing our democracy.

First, income in America is now more concentrated in fewer hands than it has been in 80 years. Almost a quarter of total income generated in the United States is going to the top 1 percent of Americans.

The top one-tenth of 1 percent of Americans now earn as much as the bottom 120 million of us.

Who are these people? With the exception of a few entrepreneurs like Bill Gates, they're top executives of big corporations and Wall Street, hedge-fund managers and private equity managers. They include the Koch brothers, whose wealth increased by billions last year and who are funding Tea Party candidates across the nation.

Which gets us to the second part of the perfect storm. A relative few Americans are buying our democracy as never before. And they're doing it completely in secret.

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

Read the whole story

Opinion: TRPA, Kubby and the U.S. Constitution

To the publisher,

As the new owners of the Coyote Grill located in Round Hill Square in Zephyr Cove, we received earlier in the year, a citation from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for the display of two 24X24 inch signs that serve to attract citizens to the nature of my business which is not permitted under Chapter 26 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances.

Additionally, other tenants were also cited for signage violations even as “selective signage enforcement” is well known. Even more egregiously and specifically, a tenant was cited for creating a “soil disturbance.”

To quote Thomas Paine, “Putting aside everything that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness,” let us confine ourselves merely to an examination of the current usefulness of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Since its inception in 1969, considered necessary from the “impact of tourism, ranching, and logging on the Lake Tahoe environment,” according to the TRPA Compact, the bias of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has been to subordinate commerce and private property in much the same way as that of a national park.

And to paraphrase the classical liberal economist, Ludwig Von Mises, when bureaucracy goes beyond the task of maintaining an environment in which the social cooperation of the marketplace can proceed in peace, it becomes inimical to human welfare. It obtains its revenues and finances through taxation – fiscal force.

Since that is so, Mises writes, bureaucrats cannot be given discretion in the manner of profit-oriented managers. Rather, they must be "bound to comply with detailed rules and regulations," whether a government is accountable to a despot or to the people.

In the aftermath of the Armageddon of Angora, an *Associated Press* article wrapped the disaster with a bow for those whose property went up in flames: "The fire, some say, was a disastrous side-effect of Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's sometimes single-minded approach to preserving the lake's legendary clarity. Its strict policies include fining homeowners thousands of dollars for cutting down trees from their own properties."

Perhaps taking management of trees out of their purview is a reasonable approach to more comprehensive reform. TRPA was, after all, chartered to preserve and improve the clarity of the lake and its indifference and contempt of nature itself is irrefutable here. As is the authoritarianism of an agency of state that forbids me from communicating with fellow citizens of my service-based business.

And so the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the creature of Republicans Ronald Reagan and Paul Laxalt again and again rears its repulsively ugly, authoritarian head upon where and when private capital and initiative can attract commerce and protect private property.

As Libertarians, I did not meet Steve Kubby when I sought California's 60th Assembly seat in 1998 as he campaigned for governor from Lake Tahoe's North Shore. But as co-author of Proposition 215, he had successfully navigated through an entrenched enemy's fortified prohibition bureaucracy and the evisceration of a tyranny had begun.

The time is nigh to assert the Founding Father's original intent of the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution, affording

the states and their citizen's, prerogatives now denied by the Federal Leviathan.

Man up, Congressmen Dean Heller and Tom McClintock and help Steve Kubby and those of us in the Tahoe basin triumph over the tyranny of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Ut instituimus pergamus. (Let us continue as we have begun.)

Leland Faegre, president Milky Way Incorporated dba Coyote Grill

Opinion: Swanson is a team player

To the community,

As the parents of six children, business owners and long-time residents of South Lake Tahoe, we support Angela Swanson for City Council. She understands our community and will represent us wisely. She wants to make Tahoe better for families and sees them as the key to building the next generation.

We respect her abilities to make state and federal government work for our community. She is a leader, a communicator and a team player. We need all those qualities on our City Council.

Please join us in voting for Angela Swanson.

Michael and Madonna Doyle, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Ideas how to vote on Nov. 2

Publisher's note: *The following editorial is from the Oct. 10, 2010, Sacramento Bee.*

The *Sacramento Bee* believes that an informed electorate is the bedrock of a sturdy democracy. Endorsements are one of many sources of information voters can use in making their decisions. That's why The Bee's editorial board offers recommendations in competitive races. Below are our endorsements to date for the Nov. 2 election.

Statewide Offices:

Governor: Jerry Brown (D)

Lieutenant Governor: Abel Maldonado (R)

Attorney General: Steve Cooley (R)

Treasurer: Bill Lockyer (D)

Secretary of State: Debra Bowen (D)

Controller: John Chiang (D)

Insurance Commissioner: Dave Jones (D)

Superintendent of Public Instruction (nonpartisan): Tom Torlakson

Read the whole story

Opinion: Fortier's integrity a reason to vote for her

To the community,

I would like to endorse Claire Fortier for City Council. It has been a pleasure to know Claire and I wholeheartedly endorse her candidacy. Her communication and leadership skills will serve the needs of this community well. She is an integral part of this community and her integrity is top notch. This is your community and voting does make a difference

Mary Maul

Howell presents game plan for Douglas County

To the community,

Because Douglas County is facing unprecedented challenges I am seeking election to the county commission District 4 seat. My experience, skills, and abilities best match the needs of our county.

During the past 20 years, I have had the pleasure of being a member of many local community boards and committees. The fact that I live in Stateline and operate a business in the Carson Valley has given me a unique perspective on our county. My action-oriented leadership has been proven as I have guided a private Douglas County company through some of the worst economic times and have maintained employment for over 800

staff. The company has grown, despite this unfortunate economy, due to the implementation of prudent business practices and accountability measures.

Like so many of you, I believe in an open, transparent, and accountable government. I believe government should not tax or assess the citizens to pay for unjustified growth. Furthermore government should operate like a business and be held accountable by the people. Past mistakes do not justify the current citizens being charged increased taxes and fees to pay off past debt.

During the most recent special state legislative session, \$265 million was taken from county budgets to make up the \$800 million state deficit. This created a shortfall in local revenues that ultimately led to reduced local services. Now the state is facing a \$3 billion deficit. What are they going to do? The truth of the matter is, the Legislature has already started reviewing what fees can be raised and what state services can be cut and "pushed down" to the local level as unfunded mandates. The voters of Douglas County must ensure the Douglas County Commission is prepared to defend the needs of the county and to make sure our local government is as efficient and cost effective as possible.

Douglas County must improve communication with its constituents while adopting prudent business practices and accountability measures. Our local government must be seen by the citizens as approachable, easy to work with, and one that listens. To that end, a good leader doesn't use personal influence, they use collaboration. As a certified mediator, I have the communication skills needed for Douglas County to accomplish this.

In addition to completing the regular duties as your commissioner, I will accomplish the following during the first six months after the election:

November – I will meet with county management to share my expectations for department accountability. I will share goal setting and measurement techniques such as the Harvard Balanced Scorecard, SWOT Analysis, and benchmarking.

December – I will prepare for the upcoming legislative session. There are already bill drafts that propose pushing unfunded mandates down to the county level. We must meet with elected legislative officials and keep a pulse on the direction of the upcoming session. We need to prepare to defend Douglas County from the state, which if left unchecked, will take local revenues to make up for the state's deficit.

January – After officially being sworn in as commissioner, I will help find a long-term resolution to the county water problems. I will assist county management with the submission of USDA grant applications to fund the necessary community water system improvements that are currently driving up user rates. Also, alternative plans will be developed, which do not include rate increases or unfair subsidies.

February – I will host a Town Hall meeting for Douglas County businesses. This meeting will be focused on listening to local business owners to find out what roadblocks currently exist and hear suggestions on how to overcome them. A public prioritized plan of action will be developed and put in place.

March – In an effort to bring new business to Douglas County, I will establish a private/public self-directed work group that will be tasked with creating a local "Business Incubator." Success rates of businesses that begin in a business incubator is 87 percent, while the success rate of businesses started on their own is less than 50 percent.

April – To improve communication, I will work with staff to ensure April's board meeting be scheduled outside of the business day (so more of the public can attend). This meeting's agenda will focus on local government performance

and accountability. This will be especially important since the 2011 legislative session should be nearing its end and we at the local level need to know how any new legislation will affect us.

In my opinion, a county commissioner has a greater influence on the direction of our local community than any other elected official in the state. I am grateful for this opportunity to be elected to such an important board. I respectfully ask that you vote for me, Lawrence Howell, when choosing who will represent you as the next District 4 County Commissioner.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. Howell, Stateline

Gooch touts experience of being on the inside

To the community,

I have been a resident of the city of South Lake Tahoe for 35 years. During that time I have raised my family here, worked for the city, owned and operated a small business, and currently I assist my husband who is a self-employed painting contractor with his recordkeeping.

I am running for City Council with the conviction, passion, and goal of making our community the best it can be. I worked for the city for 18 years and retired six months ago. Of those 18 years, I had 16 years experience in working with the city's budget, grants, bonds, contracts, etc. I recognize the issues that face this community from the inside out. I know the

budget and where to look for savings. I am aware of what grants the city currently has and possible sources of future grant funding. Being that said, I am also conscious of the difficulties that the minimum wage earners, small business owners and self-employed business owners face while they try to survive during these difficult economic times.

This campaign should not be run on the “if the city had 3 billion dollars, this is what I would do” statement, nor should it be a bash TRPA game. It should focus on the “real” issues that are important to our community (the budget deficit, the disappearing community, the transparency and lack of trust in the leadership of our community, growing the economy, – just to name a few) and what we can realistically do to address these issues. My endorsers/supporters are the small business owners, the clerks at the grocery store, the waiters and waitresses, the unemployed persons, my neighbors and friends. These people know who I am and what I represent – and that is integrity, honesty, intelligence, common sense, and what should be greatly beneficial, is the direct experience and knowledge of how this city should/could operate.

The community has asked for change. I offer that change. I am not a “polished” politician; I am just me – a resident of the community that I love. If you are truly ready for a change, please vote for me on Nov. 2. I can and will be the voice of all the people of our community and the voice of reason.

Adrian Gooch, South Lake Tahoe

Speed up vote count by sending vote-by-mail ballot Friday

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Oct. 29, 2010, Sacramento Bee.*

Most people would like to get election results on election night, not days or weeks after the polls close. The millions of California voters who vote by mail can help avoid delays and speed the count by mailing their ballots no later than today.

That's right, fill it out and drop it in the mail or take it to your local registrar's office today, right now, if that is possible.

A Friday mailing before the Tuesday election will ensure that your ballot gets to the registrar's office in time to be counted at all. It will also guarantee the ballot arrives in enough time to allow county elections officials to process it in time to include your vote in the election night tally.

Read the whole story

Opinion: \$7 bil. year Indian gaming industry gets little

notice

Publisher's note: This editorial is from the Oct. 26, 2010, Sacramento Bee.

For all their palaver about jobs, Democrat Jerry Brown and Republican Meg Whitman ignore public talk about a growing industry that generates \$7 billion-plus annually.

Soon after taking the oath of office, however, the next governor will face weighty issues presented by California Indian tribes that own casinos and hope to renegotiate compacts with the state. Tribes that aspire to own Las Vegas-style casinos will want a place at the bargaining table.

Brown is no neophyte to the world of gambling and its regulation. As attorney general, he oversaw card rooms. But neither he nor Whitman has discussed the topic in any detail on the campaign trail.

The gambling industry spent \$48 million lobbying in Sacramento during the first decade of this century. During that period, Indian casinos and some tribes and investors became rich, while counties and residents of certain rural areas faced traffic, environmental stress and social costs.

There is no turning back. Expansion will continue.

Read the whole story

Thanks for successful

political forum

To the community,

The South Tahoe Association of Realtors, South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, and Lake Tahoe News sponsored a City Council candidates forum Oct. 14. The South Tahoe Association of Realtors would like to thank Inn by the Lake for hosting the event that was attended by more than 65 community members.

We would also like to thank the candidates for their participation, and David Kurtzman, who served as our moderator.

Our special thanks to Local Government Committee Chair, Jill Stanton-Bricker of RE/MAX Realty Today for her outstanding effort and coordination of this event, and to Ken Daley of RE/MAX Realty Today for contributing his energy and passion to this effort.

Sincerely,

South Tahoe Association of Realtors Executive Committee