

Opinion: EDC's pension house of cards

By Larry Weitzman

It was just reported that El Dorado County's unfunded pension liability will exceed \$300,000,000 by the close of the fiscal year of June 30, 2016.

This number was extrapolated from the recently released numbers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, by CalPERS, which stated that EDC's unfunded liability totaled \$282,029,540 and that was a growth in unfunded liabilities of \$51,837,982 from the previous fiscal year. With the poor rate of return for the CalPERS pension system, unfunded liabilities will continue to grow at an alarming rate, and when the numbers come in for June 30, 2016, it will likely exceed \$330,000,000. And it will get worse.



Larry Weitzman

CalPERS pension system is based on an annual rate of return of 7.5 percent. They claim that their 20-year average is 7 percent. But the U.S. never had a national debt of \$20 trillion and a national debt growth rate that has doubled the debt in the last eight years. It went from \$10 trillion to \$20 trillion during that eight-year period. Because of this huge debt, interest rates have been kept at near zero by the Federal Reserve, so the cost of the debt is kept artificially low and the Fed will continue to do so. A 1 percent rise in

the interest rate costs the U.S. government \$200 billion annually. With this growing debt and with governments around the world like Japan also with huge national debts, interest rates will continue to remain at near zero levels for the foreseeable future. And therein lies a huge problem for CalPERS.

During the stock market rise from about 2009 to 2014 CalPERS did well, but since then it has really suffered with a 2.4 percent rate of return for fiscal year ending 2015 and a more miserable 0.61 percent for the fiscal year ending 2016. There is also talk of lowering the annual average estimate of rate of return to 6.5 percent. The main reason the stock market has been bid up to a Dow Jones Industrial Average of about 18,000 is because most investors switched from interest bearing securities to stocks (equities) creating more demand for equities. Now stocks have rates of returns not much higher than interest rates. Many "experts" think a correction is coming. CalPERS rate of return for the last two years looks to be the future.

With interest rates remaining low, CalPERS cost to the taxpayers is going to rise. At a 7.5 percent rate of return, it is projected by CalPERS that the annual cost of pensions for EDC will increase by about \$16 million over six years, but more frightening is that these increased projected pension costs will total more than \$63 million in total additional benefit payments from the county for the next six years. That is more than the cost of the new sheriff's facility. But what if the low rate of return continues? We know interest rates are unlikely to significantly rise in the next few years, what then? Will the rate of return stay below 2 percent and if it does, will contributions rise considerably, perhaps more than double? That \$63 million number could easily exceed \$100 million. And that's with salaries remaining flat for six years.

EDC's contribution rate is already 19 percent for

miscellaneous employees and 36 percent for public safety employees. Expect those rates to rise significantly and unfunded liabilities to rise in even greater numbers. New EDC revenues for the six years might not even cover this projected \$63 million in pension costs increases.

It has been estimated that for EDC to leave the CalPERS system it would cost a cash buyout of \$1 billion to currently guarantee all the current pensions and future pensions for current employees. That is a non-starter.

CalPERS likes to put out plenty of spin, like public pensions benefits are not excessive. They are when you consider that we have over 30 retirees receiving pensions in excess of \$90,000 and dozens at over \$100,000 annually. Employee contributions are about equal to Social Security at 6.25 percent. Public safety employees contribute about 9 percent. If they were in the Social Security System which requires a similar employee contribution of 6.2 percent, their benefits would be about a quarter of what they currently receive. Social Security currently maxes out at about \$2,639 a month or about \$32,000 a year and from that there is in most cases a Medicare deduction of a \$1,200 to \$3,000 annually. And that is at age 66. At age 62 that number drops to about \$2,000 a month. There are some retirees in the county that are receiving pensions of over \$200,000 starting at an age of 52, not 66.

Another spin of CalPERS is that police and firefighters don't retire at age 50 at 90 percent of pay. While that may not be exactly true many have 30 years in at age 55 and the majority of EDC retired employees receiving over \$100,000 a year are retired deputy sheriffs and sheriffs. Employees of EDC other than public safety in 30 years can retire at 60 percent, public safety at 30 years receive 90 percent of their highest pay. After 30 years, it doesn't pay to continue working in public safety as working earns no more money than a 30-year retiree after his 9 percent pension contribution deduction.

EDC has a serious problem in funding its pension obligation. And I haven't even discussed EDC's retiree health plan which has a \$75.6 million obligation of which \$62.7 million is unfunded. That means EDC's unfunded benefit obligations will total near or more than \$400 million as of June 30, 2016, which was four months ago. It has grown since and will continue to metastasize at an alarming rate. This is a stage four emergency.

One more nuclear bomb while I am at it. If CalPERS goes broke or runs out of money to pay these exorbitant pensions, guess who by law picks up the tab. That's right, the taxpayers.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: A hungry child cannot learn

By Larry Elwell

Eric had multiple cavities and several abscesses. His younger sister Madeline was not in much better shape.

"He has something wrong with each tooth," the dental student said in amazement. "He has to be in constant pain." I nodded my agreement, not really surprised by the news.

I'm the principal of Victoria Elementary School in San Bernardino, where the dental student was assessing Eric's oral wellness as part of the annual fall screening we bring to all 500 children in our student body. In partnership with Loma Linda University's dental school, which triages the worst

cases and then follows up weekly with their mobile clinic, this program treats our students throughout the school year. For many kids, it's the only dental care they receive.

Eric had a bright, cheerful demeanor and near perfect attendance, making it all the more incredible to learn that he'd been living in pain. Thankfully, the dental school put Eric and his sister at the top of their patient list— after two years of treatment, their dental health is finally approaching normal.

Eric and Madeline's circumstances are not unique at our school. In our ZIP code, half of the children live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census. Almost monthly we have students undergoing extractions of abscessed teeth caused by bacterial infections, which, left untreated, can spread to the jaw, neck, and brain causing even more serious medical conditions.

To me, Eric's teeth represent a problem in the way we measure whether we are providing economically disadvantaged students with educational opportunities on par with their wealthier peers. In addition to academic support, we must factor in the many needs of our children beyond the classroom. Are they hungry? Did they sleep? Basic necessities cannot be assumed when dealing with poverty because we know that hungry and tired children do not perform well in class.

In 2013, Gov. Jerry Brown shifted state educational funds to allocate more per-pupil to students from low-income families, and to increase local control. This shift will enable Victoria to expand the range of services to support our students. Starting this school year, we now have a person dedicated to following up with students in everything from school work, basic needs, and most important, emotional support for the psychological effects of poverty.

I was introduced to Victoria Elementary seven years ago, when a colleague called it a "hidden gem." Through a fluke of

geography, Victoria is located in San Bernardino, but it's part of the neighboring Redlands school district. The differences are stark. Redlands, a city in the top 100 best places to live in California, is a "destination district." It's where teachers want to teach, students want to learn, and parents want their children to go to school. Transfer requests are many and successful transfers are highly coveted. San Bernardino, on the other hand, is third from the bottom on that same list of 240 cities. Poverty is high. Security is uncertain, both in terms of personal safety and food security.

Given the unmet needs in this community—needs as fundamental as food, clothing, and shelter—I consider myself lucky that when I took the principal position at Victoria, I inherited a Family Resource Center (FRC) on my campus. The FRC is our hub for community outreach. Originally funded through California's Healthy Start Initiative, Redlands Unified has retained four FRCs across the district. Staffing duties are shared by a case manager from a local charity and a school worker.

Working in a community where many lack the basics, I've come to learn that poverty doesn't mean impoverishment. The families that make up the Victoria community are generous with what they have. Neighbors often walk each other's children to school. It's also common for them to open their homes to one another so that parents have a place where they can leave their children before starting their early morning commutes to work. Even with this esprit de corps, more is needed.

Addressing hunger is one of the most vital issues we deal with. The school, formerly surrounded by orange groves and strawberry fields, now lies in the middle of a food desert. Many of our families don't have cars, and public transit is both slow and sporadic, especially on weekends. There's a liquor store nearby, but the nearest market is a five-mile round-trip walk.

More than 90 percent of Victoria's students participate in the

National School Lunch Program and receive free or reduced meals. Every Wednesday, a local church brings in bread donations from the Panera restaurant chain, which the children are free to take home. On Fridays the kids start the weekend with bags of groceries provided through the United Way's Backpack Program. Sometimes it isn't enough, so we run our own food pantry to help families who run into emergencies.

Several years ago we transformed an unused space outside a kindergarten classroom into a vegetable garden. Through local grants and the tireless efforts of several teachers and our after-school coordinator, children helped plant and sow lettuce, chard, and cauliflower. We use the fruits of their labor in our school cafeteria and we send some home with the families who help keep the garden maintained.

Some of our families cannot afford to buy their children shoes. Seeing first- graders shuffle around in adult-sized shoes is not uncommon. At the start of this school year, Kim, the assistant principal, stopped at a local Payless to buy a fifth- grader and her brother new shoes. The last time they got new shoes was when she and I took them to an Assistance League-sponsored shopping trip last March. I think these are the only times these children have had new shoes.

The emotional effects of poverty are more hidden, but no less insidious. Simply put, poverty hurts—physically and emotionally. With a school full of young children, we see a lot of separation anxiety, which our staff is well equipped to handle. But for deeper emotional trauma we seek outside help. When Nathan's mother was battling cancer, I would fish him from her car and Kim or I would sit him in the office. Some days we could get him to class; other days we couldn't. It was only after our case manager from the Building a Generation charity arranged counseling that his anxiety got better.

Families do what they need to survive. Often, this means doubling or even tripling up in a house. This creates a host

of scenarios I never encountered as a solidly middle-class kid growing up. At the milder end, it means their children are left in the care of older siblings or roommates with whom families have banded together to pay rent. At the more extreme end, arguing or abuse in the home in one form or another can result. We work with students and parents who themselves are working through their varying levels of anxiety or depression or worse. Some families handle it well and others struggle. Some self-medicate.

I tell our teachers that we can't control what happens at home, but we can control how we react to it. The first thing we remind each other is: "Don't confuse issues of poverty with issues of morality." Simple things like homework completion need to be viewed through that lens. Does the student have someone who can help her with her homework? Does she even have a place where she can work? More than a few teachers let students stay after school to do their homework. Every child needs a champion.

The daily encounters with our parents and students are as important as any academic, medical, or social service at our school. I am often outside at arrival and dismissal times. Not only is this a great way to welcome or say goodbye to students, it gives our parents easy access to the "person in charge." For every sit-down meeting I've had with a parent I've had two curbside conferences. The level of familiarity is important. Not only does it relieve parents to know that I watch over their children, but it helps create a sense of community that everyone belongs here.

It's easy to get lost in the enormity of the conditions in which we operate. Many of the problems, such as affordable housing and jobs with livable wages, are beyond our power to solve. However, a sense of belonging is what gives us the tenacity to not only carry on but to help our students be resilient. Poverty makes it harder to succeed, but it is by no means an insurmountable barrier. Parents understand that we

are on their side and their gratitude is evident every Teacher Appreciation Day when there is no shortage of flan, pan dulce, or tres leches cake for the staff.

Larry Elwell is the principal of Victoria Elementary School in San Bernardino. This essay is part of a Zocalo Inquiry into what makes a healthy neighborhood, produced in conjunction with the California Wellness Foundation's Advancing Wellness Poll.

Letter: Re-elect Vogelgesang to STPUD board

To the community,

As the election nears, I feel compelled to write a quick note expressing my endorsement for Randy Vogelgesang's re-election to the STUPD board.

The members of our community that sit on the board make decisions that play a critical role on how our community thrives both from the standpoint of infrastructure and STUPD's role in creating an agency that adds high quality employment to our town. The complexity of decisions made on the board need to be weighed by looking at history and precedent but at the same time there needs to be a vision for the future. Always balancing where we've been with where we intend to go.

Randy has been a local for over 30 years and has always been an active member in our community. Having already served on the board; including as chairman; he has the background and experience and has excelled as a board member.

I have known and worked with Randy for over 15 years and he has always shown exceptional judgment. He has an ability to analyze a complex problem and provide a creative and reasonable solution. As a structural engineer that has built a successful business based off of smart, no nonsense engineering principles, he carries those same values with his decision making on the board.

Randy has been a valuable asset as a member of the STPUD board. He is capable of making decisions and creating solutions that are in the best interest of our community.

It is for these reasons on Nov. 8 I will be voting for Randy Vogelgesang.

Best,

Brooke Martone-Ballachey, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Caesars helps homeless coalition

To the community,

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless (TCH) would like to thank Caesars Foundation and Harrah's & Harveys Lake Tahoe for their support. In September the Caesars Foundation awarded TCH with a \$10,000 grant to operate the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room.

These funds will help provide overnight refuge from the elements to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the winter months.

Additionally, the Harrah's Employees Reaching Out (HEROs) were

very helpful in our pilot season by providing volunteers and donating supplies.

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is looking for groups to run supply drives and for volunteers for the 2016-17 winter season. We can be contacted at tahoewarmroom@gmail.com or 775.573.0822.

Sincerely,

Marissa Muscat, executive director

Opinion: Californians want more from neighborhoods

By Joe Mathews

California is a state of large things: A 1,100-mile coastline, giant mountain ranges, and big cities. In such a sprawling place, how much could people care about their own little neighborhoods?

Answer: An awful lot.



Joe Mathews

This is a state of neighborhoods. And Californians are very

devoted to their own. We identify ourselves as residents of neighborhoods more frequently than as residents of towns and cities. While surveys show we are mostly satisfied with our communities and our lives, we also want more from our neighborhoods.

Much more.

Californians' hunger for neighborhoods that offer more opportunity is demonstrated in an extensive "Advancing Wellness" poll of Californians from the California Wellness Foundation and the Field Research Corporation. That love, and that hunger, bind the 30-some stories, including this column, that comprise a Zócalo series on California and the health of its neighborhoods.

If you consume national media, you might think America is an especially anxious and pessimistic country. But in the Advancing Wellness poll, about 90 percent of Californians are at least somewhat satisfied with how things are going in their lives; 91 percent of us are at least somewhat hopeful about the future.

Such hope and optimism begins at home. Majorities of us see our own communities as healthy places to live, where people of diverse backgrounds get along and where we can find the parks, schools, public safety, groceries, and race relations we want.

But the picture is far from golden, particularly if you're light on gold.

It is not news that California, by some measures, is our most unequal state. We lead the country in billionaires and are home to America's richest region (the Bay Area), but we also have the nation's highest poverty rate (when we measure the value of public assistance and the cost of living).

These differences are most intimately felt at the neighborhood level. Californians worry that the problems of their

neighborhoods will determine their own fates. If your neighborhood is polluted and you don't know your neighbors, will you have health problems and be disconnected from the institutions—in education, in health, in the economy—that might change your circumstances?

There are big income-related differences in how Californians see neighborhoods, the poll suggests. Seventy-three percent of upper-income Californians describe their community as at least very good on being a safe place to live; among low-income Californians, that figure is only 40 percent.

The poll shows that people's ambitions for their neighborhoods are high across the spectrum. One big ambition: Californians desperately want their neighborhoods to help them find jobs.

That's not conventional wisdom. Public conversation about jobs tends to link employment to the national, international, or larger regional economy, and to trends outside the control of your neighborhood, from technology to education to trade. But millions of Californians have become unhappily accustomed to long commutes—from the places where we live to the places where we work. "Can your neighborhood get you a job?" is a fresh question.

It's a question Californians want answered. Fewer than half of those in the survey—44 percent—rated their own community as a good or excellent place to get a good job; 52 percent offered a negative rating. And just 28 percent of Californians said their community was good at offering job opportunities for those who most need them, like at-risk youth or the Californians returning to the labor force after doing prison time.

A neighborhood weak on jobs has a snowball effect. Among the top threats to community health identified by Californians in the poll were extended unemployment by residents, employment in high-stress jobs, or people having to work multiple jobs.

While conversation about community health often centers on quality-of-life questions, Californians see community health as fundamentally economic. And they're right. And if our state can find answers to their concerns, we'd also be building a more cohesive California with higher incomes, better and more affordable housing, more accessible education, and smarter treatment of chronic health problems.

Of course, Californians don't all want exactly the same things from their neighborhoods. Other surveys and rankings of the most popular Californian places to live are striking for the variety of cultures, economies, geographies, and climates people prefer, in neighborhoods from Folsom to Poway.

But the Advancing Wellness data show a strong correlation between how people feel about their own health and the level of opportunities they see in their very own neighborhoods. We want a rich mix of offerings—from schools to parks and especially to jobs—and we want them close by.

These days, the biggest California dreams begin at home.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Letter: Former principal supporting Reilly

To the community,

Larry Reilly is the candidate best qualified to be a member of the LTUSD school board. As the former principal of Whittell High School, I have seen Larry work collaboratively with

teachers and administrators alike to not only identify issues but to develop and implement solutions. With a stellar career as a classroom teacher, Larry knows how to raise student and teacher performance. Best of all, Larry is always analytical and action-oriented.

There are surely candidates with excellent credentials, but Larry Reilly is the person you need right now. Public education is at a critical juncture, and Larry has the precise expertise and experience to ensure that your community delivers the best education possible.

Sue Shannon, Sedona, Ariz., former principal Whittell High School

Opinion: Democracy is best in moderation

By Jason Brennan

The open secret of democracy is that it works because it doesn't quite work as advertised. Representative democracies do not simply impose the will of the people. They overperform, producing better policies than the people actually want because elites keep the masses in check (and vice versa). But the new wave of populism through Europe and North America threatens to upset the balance.

We are witnessing a rising tide of nationalist populism. The end of the Cold War was supposed to bring about a cosmopolitan, globalized, liberal world. But now larger and larger segments of voters in Western democracies want to close borders, cut trade, and kick out the brown and yellow people,

especially the brown people who practice scary religions.

Whether you use “populist” as a compliment or an insult depends a great deal on what you think makes “populism” tick. If you think populist movements are about the disaffected and left-behind forcing their governments to help them, you’ll like populism. But if you think—as I do—that populist movements consist of misinformed people pushing for counterproductive policies, policies that will hurt them rather than help them—then you’ll sigh with relief when such movements fail, as they usually do in the end.

Politics are often thought of as apocalyptic battles of good and evil, of the good guys versus the bad guys. But economists prefer to think in terms of incentives. In particular, people behave (and misbehave) as they they do because they’re incentivized to do so by the way we distribute political power.

When we concentrate power in the hands of an elite few, such as kings, oligarchs, or a band of aristocrats, they have every incentive to use it for their own interests at the expense of others. When we spread power out widely, as in a democracy, no individual voter has significant power. This removes the incentive to vote selfishly, but it also removes the incentive to vote wisely. Individual voters aren’t rewarded for being knowledgeable or thinking carefully about their votes; they aren’t punished for being misinformed or indulging delusions. To illustrate, imagine you were in a 1,000-student class and the professor announced a final exam. But suppose she adds, “I’ll grade each of you, but instead of being awarded your own grade, I’ll average all the grades together, and you’ll each receive the class average.” The other students and you probably wouldn’t study much, or might not bother to focus on the more challenging material presented in lectures. The class average could easily wind up being an F.

Democratic politics faces the same problem. The American

National Election Studies and other surveys of voter knowledge routinely find that most voters are uninformed. Voters know who the president is and not much else. They can't estimate the unemployment rate within 5 percentage points. They don't know how much money the government spends on different programs, or what the government did last year. After the Brexit vote, we discovered that "leave" voters who wished to flee the European Union greatly overestimated the number of immigrants in the U.K. and greatly underestimated how much foreign investment comes from the E.U. Voters not only lack the background in the social sciences needed to evaluate or make sense of the relevant facts. They lack knowledge of the relevant facts themselves. Non-voters tend to know even less.

It's not that citizens are stupid; it's that they just don't care – and that's a rational response to the incentives democracy creates. Since none of our individual votes matter except as part of the collective majority, it's easy to conclude that we can afford to remain ignorant, or indulge irrational and false political beliefs. In fact, understanding how to vote well—whether politicians deserve to be kicked out and replaced—requires tremendous knowledge. One needs to know 1) who has been in power, 2) what they had the power to do, 3) what their options were, and 4) what the likely effects of different policies would have been.

It's tempting to view populist movements as the people "taking back" their government, rebelling against corrupt and incompetent leaders. But this gives the movements more credit than they deserve. Populist waves tend to be made up of low information voters. Consider a stereotypical early Donald Trump supporter. He might look around his rural hometown and have a vague sense that white people in the fancy suburbs are richer, happier, have healthier children, and hold better jobs. He might know that 50 years ago his hometown held a small factory, which disappeared when he was a child. He might vaguely be aware that poor Chinese people have gotten richer,

and wonder if somehow that happened at his expense. But being aware of these conditions does not magically transform him into a good voter. To know which policies would help his hometown, he'd need significant knowledge of economics, sociology, and related disciplines. If you have felt ill for the past month, that does not magically enable you to self-diagnose that you have cancer, nor does it magically imbue you with the medical knowledge to treat your cancer.

Representative democracy tries to split the difference between elitism and populism. To win elections, politicians have incentives to cater to the policy preferences of the median voter. But politicians and bureaucrats also retain significant independence. They sometimes override or ignore what voters want.

They can use this independence for good or ill. Recently, political scientist Martin Gilens measured how responsive presidents have been to different groups of voters. Gilens found that when voters at the 90th, 50th, and 10th percentiles of income disagree about policy, presidents are about six times more responsive to the policy preferences of the rich than those of the poor.

As a committed "small-d democrat," Gilens is upset by these findings. But he admits there's a positive twist: Voters at the 90th percentile of income tend to be significantly better informed than voters at the 50th or 10th percentiles. Gilens found that poor Democrats approved more strongly of invading Iraq in 2003. They more strongly favor the Patriot Act, invasions of civil liberty, torture, economic protectionism, and restricting abortion rights and access to birth control. They are more opposed to gay rights. In contrast, high information Democrats—such as party elites—are more strongly in favor of free trade and the strong protection of civil rights, and are less interventionist.

I read Gilens's work as showing us an uncomfortable truth:

Democracy works because it doesn't quite work. If politicians just did exactly what the median voter wanted, we would have worse policies – policies people support because they are ignorant or misinformed. Democracies work because politicians and bureaucrats can to some extent override most voters' preferences. Often they make better choices aligned with what better-informed elites would like to see.

Political elites are far from perfect. They often cater to special interest groups in ways that undermine the common good. For instance, economists of all ideological persuasions despise agricultural subsidies. Yet the federal government grants subsidies and protective tariffs to the corn lobby—that's why your Coke has corn syrup rather than sugar in it. Limited benefits are concentrated for a select few (companies like ADM) and steep costs diffused among the many (taxpayers and consumers). This kind of "rent seeking" is pervasive in representative democracy because politicians have every incentive to indulge it while voters have no incentive to learn about it, let alone fight it.

These problems—voter ignorance and misinformation, populism, rent seeking—are endemic to representative democracy. It's not because bad people sabotage the system. Rather, the system incentivizes these behaviors. No one has yet come up with a workable solution.

The good news is that representative democracy still performs better than the other political systems we've tried. In general, people living in representative democracies are more prosperous, happier, and healthier than people living elsewhere. Representative democracies do a consistently better job of protecting civil and economic liberty. They allow popular movements and educated, powerful elites to serve as checks against each other. Overall, representative democracies work quite well—and that's true whether you prefer railing against elitist cosmopolitanism or pitchfork nativist populism. But there's no guarantee that the system will

continue to work. Democracies do sometimes collapse when populist demagogues rise to power. It looks like we'll dodge that bullet this election, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't worry about the future.

Jason Brennan is the Flanagan Family chair of strategy, economics, ethics, and public Ppolicy at Georgetown University, and the author of "Against Democracy."

Letter: Barbells for Boobs a success



Barbells for Boobs supporters. Jen Spina is second from right.

To the community,

I would like to personally thank South Tahoe Crossfit for putting on the Barbells for Boobs fundraising event on Oct. 15.

Over \$12,000 was raised for metastatic breast cancer research (Metavivor.org) and for mammograms for under-insured or non-insured people regardless of age or gender (Barbellsforboobs.org). The event was near and dear to my heart and to my bald, shiny head as I am currently battling and winning my own fight with breast cancer. I just finished five months of chemotherapy and will follow with a lumpectomy in December and five weeks of radiation in January-February.

I would like to give an additional heartfelt thanks to South Tahoe Crossfit (they have waived my gym fees since my diagnosis) and to the South Lake Tahoe community and my friends and family for all of their love, support, and cheerleading to get me through all of this. I have been #fittofight (my motto!) from the get-go and plan on staying that way. Read more **online** about my story and how to donate.

Jen Spina, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Put Reilly on LTUSD board

To the community,

I am a resident and registered voter in Nevada, but I work in Meyers, attended Meyers Elementary, grew up in Christmas Valley, and graduated from South Tahoe High School (STHS). The state line is a blur to me because I view the South Shore as one community.

I have two children currently in high school, one at Whittell and one at STHS; I also have another child who graduated from Whittell and is now a college freshman. I believe that a good public education system is the great equalizer in America, and that every child has a right to the best education possible. I am active in both high schools' booster clubs and the STHS Performing Arts Booster Association; I am a former member of the STHS school site council; and for fun I attend Douglas County school board meetings.

Public education is my passion.

My participation in our local schools provides me with an educated opinion when it comes to whom I would support for school board, candidate Larry Reilly.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District's (LTUSD) focus has been on primary education. The economy has improved and the workforce is becoming more flexible; LTUSD has an opportunity now to increase its student population and improve the services it provides. Parents relocating to an area often look at academics when choosing a place to relocate. To accomplish this goal we need enlightened leadership and experience. Mr. Reilly has great leadership skills and decades of real local experience, especially within the secondary education system. School board members need a solid understanding of the needs of all their constituents: students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other school board members. Mr. Reilly and his wife, Michelle, (who is a counselor at STHS) have been working with these constituents locally all their adult lives. He will bring much-needed experience to the board.

Mr. Reilly knows what LTUSD needs to do to best serve the students and the community. He understands that the best way we can improve our local schools is to change our attitude and our priorities. It's not about the lack of money, the challenging demographics, or the facilities; it's about attitude and priorities. Educating our students needs to come

first, and all the other extracurricular activities will follow. Mr. Reilly knows what motivates high school students, teachers, and administrators. Mr. Reilly knows this community well, through teaching, coaching, and raising two kids within LTUSD. His local knowledge, wisdom, and leadership will be a welcome addition to the Lake Tahoe Unified School Board.

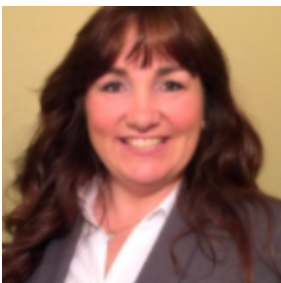
Please vote for Larry Reilly ... because if I could, I would.

Kelly Krolicki, Stateline

Letter: Do something about domestic violence

To the community,

I have always found it interesting that October is both Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Both issues are very important, and when either touches a woman, the effects are devastating for her, her family, and her friends.



Jenny Davidson

We have been able to make great strides on both these fronts in recent years, but domestic violence still occurs far too often. Over 3.7 million women are victims of domestic violence

every year—that's 15 times the number of women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer annually.

Like breast cancer, domestic violence is not exclusive to women. Although 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence, 1 in 7 men will also become victims. Rates of victimization are even higher in the LGBTQ community. No one should ever be subjected to domestic violence.

You can make a difference:

- Store our crisis line number, 800.575.5352, on your phone.
- Offer non-judgmental support to loved ones who disclose domestic violence and help them to connect with Stand Up Placer.
- Take part in Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities.
- Consider making a donation to Stand Up Placer to help us provide critical services for survivors and their children.

You probably know one or more friends, family members, or co-workers who are survivors, even if you're not aware of it yet. What will you do when a friend or loved one confides their personal struggle with domestic violence? I'm asking you to take a stand today.

Sincerely,

Jenny Davidson, Stand Up Placer executive director