

Opinion: Local elected officials need to listen to the middle class

Publisher's note: *The following was a speech read by South Lake Tahoe resident Ernie Claudio at the Dec. 15 South Tahoe Public Utility District meeting.*

My name is Ernie Claudio and I am here today to give notice. There is something wrong in our nation. The middle class is dying. We are suffering, we are losing our jobs and we are losing our homes. I've been to seven Occupy protests collecting opinions from the middle class about "The Problem".

The problem is our elected officials, from top to bottom, including the elected officials in this room today.

We (the middle class) are losing money and that money is our buying power and it is this buying power that keeps this country going. So every penny that comes out of the pockets of the middle class is part of the hemorrhaging that is causing the death of the middle class. So if the water rates go up, then you (the board of directors) are part of the problem and I respectfully ask that you remove yourselves from office, because that's what's coming.

The elected officials were supposed to protect us, and they failed. The elected officials were supposed to protect our jobs and they failed. Now there is a nationwide outcry, ports were shut down on Monday. We are looking for politicians who can stop this hemorrhaging.

It's like a pendulum, it's gone as far as it can one direction and now its time to swing back. So the Occupy Movement, the middle class will do what it has to do to protect itself and most important, our children. I mean, how are our kids going

to be able to afford to buy a house if they can't find a job.

And to make matters worse our country has dropped down a notch when it comes to respect and honor. This happened the day a congressman from South Carolina named Joe Wilson called our president a liar in an open meeting. Do I have that right? Can I call you a liar? Well, apparently so, because he got away with it and he was not punished for it.

So this brings us into a new era; a new era of politics where respect for public officials means nothing and to insult a public official is OK. Now am I going to do that now? No, but I am warning you that its coming. Because the Occupy Movement, the middle class will do what it has to do to protect itself.

So if these rates go up one penny, you will be putting yourself in the position where you are part of the problem. That's why we would respectfully ask you to resign from office, if you cannot keep these rates frozen of even lower them.