

Opinion: Tahoe dying from being 1 dimensional



Why isn't the South Shore promoting snowshoeing-hiking, history, art and hockey? It's time to be more than a ski destination. Photos/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Unemployment, jobs and the economy were big topics in President Obama's State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

"Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by – let alone get ahead. And too many still aren't working at all," Obama said.

They are topics that also resonate in the Lake Tahoe Basin, especially this winter. With the dismal amount of snow,

businesses are not hiring the number of people they usually do this time of year. Hours are being cut. It's getting hard to pay bills.

The national unemployment numbers that came out this week are the lowest in five years at 6.7 percent. California's unemployment rate is at 8.3 percent, whereas Nevada's is 8.8 percent.

The good news is unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County ended lower than what they started at in 2013. The numbers are also lower than what they had been the previous few years during the height of the recession.

Even though retailers and ski resorts tend to ramp up hiring in December, it's not unusual for the unemployment numbers to slip a little compared to November.

Here are the 2013 unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe:

January 10.2 percent

February 9.6 percent

March 9.4 percent

April 8.6 percent

May 8 percent

June 8.1 percent

July 8.5 percent

August 7.8 percent

September 7.4 percent

October 7.6 percent

November 7.6 percent

December not released.

These are the unemployment numbers for Douglas County in 2013:

January 11.8 percent

February 11.5 percent

March 11.3 percent

April 10.8 percent

May 10.2 percent

June 10.4 percent

July 9.6 percent

August 9.5 percent

September 9.4 percent

October 9.6 percent

November 9 percent

December 9.5 percent.

This all equates to an annual rate for Douglas County of 9.4 percent. Data is not collected in a manner to know the unemployment rate just at the lake portion of Douglas County.

What will be more telling about the local economy is what the numbers are like the first quarter of 2014 because of what the weather has done to hiring practices.

But what does not show up on unemployment charts is people with reduced hours, pay cuts or people who have stopped looking for a job.

People aren't coming to Tahoe to play and spend money right now because it's a one-dimensional economy. Tourism works when

there is a product. Lake Tahoe is known for its winter snow fun and summer beach-hiking-biking fun.

If spastic, unpredictable weather is the new normal, then the status quo is no longer acceptable from our government leaders and more important our tourism officials. Why isn't there a push to get people to Tahoe to enjoy what the locals are doing? Talk to hikers and cyclists – trails are pretty incredible. Learning to ski or snowboard is ideal now because roads are clear, skies are blue and those slopes are well covered in white stuff.

Having a chamber official tell a Sacramento television station that people can kayak and paddleboard is dangerous when morning temps are well below freezing. It's one thing for locals to tackle Tahoe this time of year; it's another for those unfamiliar with this unforgiving body of water.

Then having her say come to Tahoe to shop because ski gear is cheap isn't really touting what Tahoe has to offer.

Where was the promotion for the restaurant week that happened earlier this month?

The South Shore needs to be showing people what the area is about, not using gimmicky make-believe characters telling people to come to the wild side.

It has long been proved that events bring people to town. But on the Lake Tahoe Visitor Authority's website there are no events listed for January or February, and one for March on the "2013 Tahoe South Travel Planner". Note the year our tourism people are telling visitors about.

What about a big Super Bowl party? It doesn't matter that there isn't a California team in the game.

Why not have a mini Olympics or make up sports that locals and tourists could compete in? Why aren't we embracing our

athletes who will be going after gold next month?

Another thing Obama said Tuesday night was, "In today's global economy, first-class jobs gravitate to first-class infrastructure."

Are you listening Lake Tahoe?