

Letter: El Dorado County and its seniors

To the community,

There have been several articles regarding the method in which El Dorado County has proposed to balance the 2017-18 budget. Some people have chosen to take it upon themselves to be an activist for seniors in El Dorado County. The articles for the most part appear to have some straightforward quality information, but look as if to have “fluffed” some of the facts.

The one piece of information saying the Board of Supervisors wants to eliminate senior legal services is misleading. This entire fiasco was started from two sources, one is a memorandum to the BOS from HHS Director Patricia Charles-Heathers, and was followed by CAO Don Ashton’s recommended budget, where he quite simply says, “The CAO office is recommending the elimination of the senior legal services program.”

He touted it carries a certain “risk and liability” to the county. Can’t get much clearer than that. Unfortunately, he was unable to provide any evidence to substantiate his statement; neither did BOS legal counsel.

The CAO has presented a recommended budget for over 1,800 employees in the county, but it seems odd that he would suggest to eliminate the one service in the county which probably has the lowest percent of financial impact on the General Fund. The proposed budget for Human Services is recommended at \$73,449,969, the budget for senior legal services is roughly \$267,778, plus “... a reduction in force of 3.5 positions....” In layman’s term they are fired.

El Dorado County is going through a momentous change which

will impact services for seniors for generations to come. El Dorado County is getting older, much older. El Dorado County is now at the point where half of the populace is age 50 or older, making EDC the oldest it has ever been. The 60-plus population has shown dramatic increases over the last 10 years. According to 2015 Census statistics, communities such as El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, Placerville, Pollock Pines, Georgetown and South Lake Tahoe and many others, the population of seniors age 60-plus has doubled since 2010.

The county must start to focus on how this population change is going to impact county services. Seniors come to El Dorado County to relax, spend their retirement checks at local businesses, away from all the congestion and noise of urban living. They want affordable housing and an infrastructure giving them easy access to dining, shopping and adequate health care.

I praise Marshall Hospital for its service to the community, but they too should adjust to the bulging aging population. Perhaps the board of directors should take a more proactive position now and open a specialized geriatric unit staffed with physicians whose specialty is only geriatric medicine. Barrier free structures and ease of mobility within health care facilities is important for seniors. Of most importance is the attitude of health service providers, and the community, toward older people which is nationally recognized as ageism.

Our seniors are a valuable asset and resource for their families and communities, and especially local economics. An age friendly community encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for the entire population and will enhance quality of life as people age.

Roger Berger, Diamond Springs