

Opinion: EDC CAO didn't tell the whole truth

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County's relatively new CAO, Don Ashton, tries to make a case for new and higher taxes. In his bottom line last paragraph of his June 6 column in *Lake Tahoe News* he says: "Here's the bottom line: we have no control over state mandates that are underfunded; we have no control over CalPERS; we have some control over property and sales taxes, but will have to make adjustments in them to maintain service levels. Budgeting. Simple, but not easy."



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The county has control over the biggest part (70 percent) of the General Fund budget. It's called salary and benefits, which have grown from a constant from the years 2010 to 2013 when salary and benefits averaged about \$118 million to a proposed 2017-18 budget of more than \$170 million; a 44 percent increase in four years and yet services have not changed.

Much of that increase is due to the infamous CAO Teri Daly 15 percent raise of about two years ago. A less but still significant reason is the increase in the EDC workforce of about 8 percent. Yet services remain constant.

Former Supervisor Norma Santiago applauded Daly even as she

was terminated as being a champion of the employees. She sure was. But Daly (and Santiago, she voted for the raise) was the enemy of the residents of El Dorado County. Over the five years including the new budget, salary and benefits raises have cost EDC residents more than \$100 million. The administration portion of our county needs to go on a diet.

I could cite specific examples of high paid employee incompetence, employees who make over \$200,000 a year, but I won't bore you with additional, lengthy details. Taxes don't have to go up, salaries are too high, especially for what we get. We need to elect people who will excise this cancer that appears to be slowly killing the patient.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.