

Opinion: EDC caters to special interests

By Shiva Frentzen

There are not very many opportunities for the Board of Supervisors to easily add to the revenue side of the balance sheet without adding additional expenditures. The BOS have made a major commitment to obligate the residents of El Dorado County to a \$2.6 million per year bond payment for the next 40 years to build a much needed sheriff's building so we can continue to provide public safety to our residents.



Shiva Frentzen

The board has asked our chief administrative officer to work with the department heads and find “operational efficiencies” to pay for this annual \$2.6 million commitment. We have nearly depleted our capital improvement project funds of \$12 million to renovate our county buildings that have been neglected for years. Our roads are deteriorating while the road funds are diminishing and we are struggling with allocating General Fund dollars to them.

Public safety and roads were the top two priorities for our residents based on the survey that was conducted by the county last year. Needless to say, the unfunded liabilities for our retiree health benefits of \$60 million are not even on our

radar but will need to be dealt with in the not too distant future.

At our Aug. 16, Board of Supervisors meeting we had an agenda item to renew the Proposition 90 ordinance that expires on Sept. 30. Proposition 90 is a "local-option" law which provides anyone over the age of 55 with relief from reassessment by allowing them to move from one county to another without undergoing a change in their base property taxes, provided that the home that is purchased in the new county is of the same, or lower value. Prop. 90 has been approved by the BOS and been in place for the past six years while the housing market was down with a high inventory of homes on the market. El Dorado County is one of the 11 out of 58 counties in California that has adopted the Prop. 90 ordinance.

The report that was submitted by staff shows that El Dorado County has received \$1.2 million less in property taxes in the past six years due to Prop. 90 incentives to these new homebuyers. The loss to the county General Fund is \$300,000 and the other \$900,000 is the lost revenue for the schools, special districts, fire districts and the two cities. So the county has forgone \$1.2 million in revenue by incentivizing a small group to buy a home in El Dorado County. The argument for supporting the Prop. 90 extension is that these homebuyers have a higher purchasing power and spend more money, hence benefiting our county.

However, there is no solid data that this group of home buyers contributes more to our local economy than other homebuyers in our county. If these people in fact have higher purchasing power than other homebuyers, then a logical sense of fairness would dictate that they pay their fair share of taxes as younger people buying a similar home.

The BOS approved the extension of the Prop. 90 for another

five years. Assuming that the number of homebuyers who take advantage of this program stays the same as in 2015-16, this policy will cause an additional \$2 million in lost property taxes over the next five years. About half a million dollars is revenue lost to the El Dorado County General Fund to provide services to our residents.

The other \$1.5 million revenue loss would impact schools, special districts, fire districts and the two cities. This is in addition to carrying the revenue loss of \$1.2 million from the past six years of incentives.

El Dorado County still needs to provide the services required for these new residents, but the current residents would subsidize the new homebuyers. We all receive the same level of services and should pay our fair share. El Dorado County should put more emphasis on creating jobs and bringing businesses to our county so any incentives should be allocated to these efforts. El Dorado County should welcome every home buyer to our county including young families who at times struggle to purchase a home and raise their children. It is unfair that a 30 year old person buying a home in El Dorado County will pay property taxes on the current full assessed value of that home, while his 55 year old neighbor can buy an identical home and have his property tax based on the value of a home he bought 30 years ago in another county. Two people purchasing identically priced homes on the same day, but one paying thousands of dollars more in property taxes each year for as long as they each own their homes.

We should also be thoughtful of other agencies in our county when making policy decisions. The struggling schools and fire districts can't afford the loss of revenue and El Dorado County will see an increase in the number of requests from fire districts, cities and special districts to help fund their programs.

The Board of Supervisors should start saying no to some of the

special interest groups instead of giving away the farm. Otherwise we put the residents of El Dorado County in a position to pay more taxes or receive inferior services from their county government. We need to get serious about balancing our budget with strong reserves for future years and not kick the can down the road.

Shiva Frentzen is the El Dorado County supervisor from District II.

Opinion: Tahoe climate lobby makes its case

By Jeff Miner

On Aug. 28 representatives from the South Lake Tahoe chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby met with staff of state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, to ask the senator to support a measure urging Congress to enact a fee on carbon-based fossil fuels. Passage of the measure (Assembly Joint Resolution 43) would be a strong show of support by California legislators that the United States needs powerful new policies to meet the greenhouse gas emission reductions goals established in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

The group brought to their attention recent studies that predict a radically altered future for the Sierra Nevada due to climate changes. The California Department of Water Resources projects that we will lose between 50 to 65 percent of our snowpack by the end of the century; and the Tahoe Environmental Research Center recently released a study showing that Lake Tahoe is warming 15 times faster than the long-term average.

“We can no longer ignore the enormous, hidden costs of burning fossil fuels – costs including disaster relief, health problems and reduced water supplies. Prices must reflect these costs,” said Bonnie Turnbull, one of three CCL representatives that met with Gaines’ office. “Passage of this legislation shows that California demands Congressional action to avert the worst costs and consequences of climate change.”

Gaines’ representative made no promises in regards to the senator’s support of the bill, acknowledging while there are clear negative impacts associated with the use of fossil fuels, that the senator had questions about the costs associated with moving to an alternative energy economy.

CCL representatives pointed to a recent report released by Regional Economic Models Inc. that predicted after 10 years, a revenue-neutral carbon tax would not only decrease carbon dioxide emissions by 33 percent, but would increase national employment by 2.1 million jobs.

“There is absolutely no question that the cost of not taxing carbon is much higher than the costs associated with transitioning to an alternative energy economy,” said Patricia Sussman, who attended the meeting.

The concept of a carbon fee is not new, but has been gaining traction as the effects of climate change are becoming more widely reported and published. Advocates of such a fee point out that it could be implemented quickly and efficiently and would push the markets to advance clean energy technologies; and incentivize other countries to enact similar legislation, thereby reducing carbon emissions globally.

The International Panel on Climate Change states that while we cannot reverse the effects of climate change, we do have the opportunity to stabilize atmospheric warming and thus reduce the threats associated with worse case climate scenarios.

“I feel that there is a moral imperative for future

generations. I am saddened by the lack of involvement by politicians,” said Karen Duron, who also made the trek to Gaines’ Sacramento office.

Citizens’ Climate Lobby is a nonprofit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change.

Jeff Miner is a member of the South Lake Tahoe chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby.

Opinion: Suicide an issue with older people

By Laura Walny

Older adults and suicide is a topic not often discussed, yet suicides do occur among older people.

Eighty-eight people aged 60 and older died as a result of suicide in El Dorado County between 2003 and 2013. That is far too many. As a community, we need to begin talking about this so we can integrate suicide prevention into older adult programs and services.

For many years, suicide prevention efforts have primarily focused on young people. We’d like to enhance these efforts, as data shows that nearly 30 percent of people who die from suicide in California are older adults.

Suicide is not an easy topic to discuss and can be more challenging for older adults. Older adults may be reluctant to talk about personal issues such as depression or thoughts of suicide. It is important that family members, friends,

caregivers and health care providers of older adults are aware of this issue, know the risks and signs, and have tools to offer support.

In 2013, a total of 3,990 people died by suicide in California; 1,152 of those people were aged 60 or older. Studies show that white males make up the largest percentage of deaths by suicide for all age groups including older adults, with a 3:1 ratio of male to female deaths by suicide. A large number of these suicides are committed with firearms. For this reason, advocacy organizations support restricting access to lethal means as one of the most important preventive strategies with all age groups, especially older adults.

Risk factors, warning signs and symptoms of suicide and depression can look different for older people than for young adults. Some risk factors increase with age, such as social isolation; chronic health conditions; disabilities; limited mobility and access to services and activities; substance abuse; and fear of prolonged illness. Symptoms of depression in older adults (such as loss of appetite, changes in sleep and disinterest in activities once enjoyed) can often be mistaken for "normal" signs of aging.

Older adults face challenges such as coping with retirement, smaller budgets, health concerns, and loss of friends and family. Research shows that as we age it is important to maintain a social circle of friends, engage in meaningful activities (such as volunteering or taking up a hobby), and stay as physically active as possible. These activities are good for our mental health and well-being, and are protective factors against suicide. If someone is severely depressed, it is important to reach out for help to a mental health professional or trained counselor.

The most critical warning signs of suicide are:

- Talking about wanting to die or about suicide

- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Looking for ways to kill oneself.

If you are concerned about a friend, relative or neighbor, don't ignore those feelings. Talk to them and ask direct questions. Call the Friendship Line at 800.971.0016 or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255 and talk with a trained counselor who can provide additional tips.

El Dorado County Mental Health and partner agencies offer trainings on suicide prevention. For questions about local suicide prevention trainings, contact Mental Health at 530.621.6130. Mental Health also operates a 24-hour mental health crisis line at 530.622.3345 in Placerville and at 530.544.2219 in South Lake Tahoe for residents experiencing a mental health crisis. In an emergency, call 911.

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, an annual campaign designed to inform and engage the community and health professionals about suicide prevention. The campaign also aims to reduce stigma surrounding the topic, and encourage mental health assistance and support for people who have attempted or thought about suicide. This year in California, the campaign is focused on suicide among older people.

Laura Walny is program coordinator for El Dorado County Mental Health.

Letter: North Tahoe Event

Center belongs to public

To the community,

The face of Kings Beach is about to be changed ... again. Laulima Partners has purchased the Ferrari Crown Motel property and has big plans for it. One of those plans involves one of our most valuable community assets, the North Tahoe Event Center. Located right in the center of town, it is home to myriad community events including weddings, funerals, public meetings, yoga, and Jazzercise. It is a benefit to the entire North Shore.

It's also free of debt, and its fantastic location right on the beach puts it in the range of a \$4 million valuation. But now the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD) wants to grant Laulima a long term lease (30 to 99 years has been thrown around) because the center has been running at a deficit.

North Shore taxpayers currently pay about \$100 a year for the recreational amenities associated with the NTPUD: the regional park, the event center, and the boat ramp and parking in Tahoe Vista. Shouldn't these taxpayers be given the option to cover the current shortfall rather than handing such a valuable asset over lock, stock, and barrel to a developer whose bottom line is ...well, the bottom line?

NTPUD would in effect be allowing a community asset to become private property. Laulima intends to build condos on the lake side of Highway 28 and a hotel on the other side (56-feet high...yikes!) And you can't blame them for wanting another lakefront venue for their project – talk about value-added.

Laulima claims locals will receive a discount on the new estimated rate of between \$800 and \$8,000 per wedding event (since we're all using the event center at nominal rates –starting at \$29/hour right now, how much of a discount would

make it worth it?); Laulima also claims there will be an area dedicated to the community (we're hopeful it won't be the janitor's closet).

Whatever the NTPUD ends up negotiating with Laulima, common sense tell us there is clearly more benefit to Laulima than North Tahoe.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance

Opinion: The word of the summer is 'victoriotic'

By Joe Mathews

It's the word of the summer: Victoriotic.

You won't find it in the Oxford English Dictionary, at least not yet.



Joe Mathews

It began its life as an epithet, hurled at me by my 7-year-old son.

“Don't be victoriotic!”

I was guilty as charged. I had finally broken a long losing

streak against him in the board game "Sequence." And I celebrated like a Super Bowl-winning quarterback, wagging my finger, dancing, and sticking out my tongue at the vanquished second-grader.

In other words, I had taken the state of being victorious too far. I had over-celebrated the win. I was so immature, even a 7-year-old noticed.

In my own defense, I'm not the only one being victoriotic these days.

The news media is thoroughly dominated by Patient Zero of the victoriotic epidemic—Donald Trump. He's constantly rubbing his primary victories, his wealth, his hot wife in everyone's faces.

Of course, he's both a politician and absurdly rich—two major risk factors for victoriotic behavior. It's now standard political strategy to blow any victory, no matter how small, into D-Day proportions in the name of "winning" the ever-shrinking news cycle.

And the rich? While it may be hard to believe, there once was a time when the wealthy downplayed their good fortune. Now much of America runs on the victoriotic speeches, books, and philanthropy of billionaires, who tell the world how great the rest of us can be if we would only heed their advice on whatever topic they imagine themselves to be experts in: education, science, environmentalism, media, sports, politics, space travel.

California, with more than its share of rich people and politicians, is our victoriotic global capital. And nobody does victoriotic like the Bay Area, with its new money tech giants. Our social media platforms basically exist for victoriotic pronouncements—about professional accomplishments, vacations, volunteerism and winsome children and pets.

Still, Silicon Valley lags Hollywood in victoriotic behavior (if little else), which was long ago institutionalized by a culture where every actor is a star, every film is a hit and everybody is feeling “better than ever.” Just ask them.

California’s public sector is also experiencing a victorioticism bubble.

We are bragging about our job growth and the ever-larger global profile of our economy (and not talking so much about the Census Bureau’s supplementary poverty measure showing that, accounting for the cost of living and public benefits, we have America’s highest incidence of poverty). Our elected officials constantly tout our leading role in fighting climate change (even as the state’s cap-and-trade regime threatens to fall apart). Our public universities are always described as the world’s best (even as they charge more, and provide less). We congratulate ourselves on our open-mindedness about immigrants because we offer drivers’ licenses for the undocumented and health benefits for undocumented children (even as millions of undocumented Californians live in the shadows).

This summer has brought great anxiety about the popular anger in the state and in the country, about the less fortunate lashing back at the more fortunate. Is the reason for the populist backlash the inequality itself? Or is it the endless victoriotic laps being run by society’s winners—on the plethora of media platforms that make the most fortunate among us more in-your-face visible than ever before?

Victoriotic behavior has many motivations. People seek validation, credibility, attention, celebrity, vindication, and even love. Or they may be expressing deep insecurities, as Trump does when he exaggerates his billions. Medical research suggests that human beings exaggerate our victories because of our brain chemistry; victorioticism feels good to us, at least for a while.

But I wonder whether living in a big state makes people feel they need to scream about even the slightest wins just to get noticed. There is so much competition—for jobs, for schools, for mates, for parking spots—that you have to be competing, to be winning, at all times. If you're not victoriotic, you're not trying. You may even be made to feel like you're losing.

One school of thought is that this epidemic, like so many other social maladies, is the product of the ways we're parenting our children now. In the second decade of the 21st century, every major moment of our children's lives can be documented with a phone, and shared, victoriously, with friends, family and the whole world.

My son is annoyed by this, quite intensely. He calls out adult behavior for being victoriotic, and is careful not to make victoriotic statements himself.

Maybe you shouldn't do a column about my word, he tells me. It would be victoriotic to brag about your son coining the term, he adds.

Yes, it would, kid. And I just did it anyway.

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

Opinion: Importance of Tahoe Summit grows

By Joanne Marchetta

Lake Tahoe was at a crossroads in 1997. The lake's famous water clarity, once measuring 100 feet, was declining year

after year because of stormwater pollution from roads and developed areas and erosion from streams damaged by logging and cattle grazing.



Joanne
Marchetta

Tahoe's forests, clear cut during the Comstock era, had grown back unnaturally thick with hazardous fuels and stands of similarly aged trees posing extreme wildfire risk. Communities were struggling with blighted buildings, outdated infrastructure, and limited private investment. And there was no place for bicycles or pedestrians in our towns.

Our region had regulations to protect the lake from new development. But it had no comprehensive restoration program to correct mistakes of the past that were continuing to harm the lake.

Former President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore knew Tahoe was a special place and wanted to help fix that situation at the first-ever Tahoe Summit in 1997. With their lead, we united more than 100 federal, state, local, nonprofit, and private sector partners in a shared mission to conserve and restore Lake Tahoe through the environmental improvement program.

Since then, EIP partners have prioritized and completed nearly 500 projects to correct the landscape-level environmental problems Tahoe faces.

Projects have restored Tahoe's streams, marshes, and wetlands;

built transit facilities and 150 miles of bike and pedestrian routes; upgraded 729 miles of roadways to reduce stormwater pollution; protected our lake from aquatic invasive species; opened 2,770 feet of shoreline for public access; built recreation facilities; and cleared hazardous fuels from tens of thousands of acres of forest around our communities.

We have accomplished far more working together through the EIP than we ever could have done working alone. And today, those yearly declines in Tahoe's famous water clarity have halted and are starting to reverse because two decades ago we made the right decisions and right commitments to work together to conserve and restore our unique mountain lake.

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., organized that first presidential summit in 1997, putting a spotlight on Lake Tahoe and the importance of its conservation and restoration as a national treasure. Reid, who has done so much for the Tahoe region and is leaving office at the end of this year, is also organizing and hosting the 20th annual Tahoe Summit this month. He will be joined by President Obama, who plans to talk about our nation confronting climate change.

Heading into this summit, we must remember that Tahoe's environment is at another important crossroads. Our climate is changing. The State of the Lake report for 2015 found the warmest air and water temperatures ever recorded at Tahoe, and a greater share of our precipitation falling as rain than ever before.

Climate change will pose unprecedented challenges for our lake and forests and mountains, and for our recreation-based economy that depends upon their health. Less snowpack and water storage, escalating tree mortality, a warming lake and environment, and population growth in major metropolitan areas all around Tahoe are just a few of the pressures we will need to confront. Climate change will only amplify the importance of us working together to meet new challenges for Tahoe and

beyond in years to come.

We must continue our partnerships to implement the EIP to restore Tahoe's water clarity and protect our forests from the drought and insects ravaging other parts of the Sierra Nevada. We must improve our transit services and bike and pedestrian trails, and improve our permitting processes to accelerate important redevelopment projects in our town centers that will improve our communities, our quality of life, and how we interact with our environment.

TRPA is committed to leading and helping in all of these important endeavors. Fortunately, the framework for collaboration and success is already in place, and every day we reach out to grow added partnerships for the benefit of Lake Tahoe. We have accomplished many things over the past 20 years and have much to be proud of. But our work is not done.

Tahoe is at an important new juncture as we head into another presidential summit. By staying committed to working together we can meet the challenges of the 21st century, make sure we face change with courage, and continue to restore and conserve this beautiful lake and forest for future generations to treasure.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Opinion: Interpreting the new history of the Old West

By Stephen Aron

Not too long ago, historians of the American West joined their artistic brethren in celebrating what we now think of as the "Old West." For historians and artists, the "winning of the West" was a glorious achievement that heralded the triumph of "civilization" over "savagery." Indeed, by the conventional scholarly wisdom and orthodox artistic vision, the vanquishing of Indians and the march of manifest destiny made America great and made Americans special.

In recent decades, however, most historians—and many Americans—have rejected this perspective. Dismantling cherished fables about the Old West and stripping the romance from the history of "Westward Ho," newer studies have exhumed the human casualties and environmental costs of American expansion. Offering little glory, these interpretations of how the West was lost have accented the savagery of American civilization.

The de Young Museum's exhibition, "Ed Ruscha and the Great American West," and its companion, "Wild West: Plains to the Pacific" at the Legion of Honor—both in San Francisco—invite us to scrutinize both the celebration and its demise. In many ways, this revisioning of western American art parallels alterations in the content and meaning of western American history. In both art and history, longstanding and powerful myths have fallen as subjects have broadened and contemporary viewpoints have shifted.

Back in the 19th century, celebrations of territorial expansion were commonplace among American historians. In his multi-volume account of "The Winning of the West" and other historical writings, Theodore Roosevelt admitted that the shedding of blood was not always "agreeable," but deemed it the "healthy sign of the virile strength" of the American people. As president of the American Historical Association and as president of the United States, Roosevelt exulted in "our manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us." He judged it

“desirable for the good of humanity at large that the American people should ultimately crowd out the Mexicans from their sparsely populated Northern provinces” and wrest the rest of the West from Indians.

Popular as Roosevelt’s histories were in his time, it was his contemporary, Frederick Jackson Turner, who put forward the interpretation that gained enduring scholarly traction. Most prominently in his 1893 essay on “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Turner assigned westward expansion the central role in the history of the United States. He contended that it had not only enlarged the nation’s territory, but had also accounted for the individualistic and democratic character of its people and its institutions. In Turner’s view, the process of moving west separated Americans from their European roots (and in Turner’s imagination, the designation “American” referred exclusively to people of European ancestry). From what Turner and his contemporaries referred to as the “Great American West” then sprang the sources of American exceptionalism and American greatness.

Subsequent generations of historians of the American West took their cues from Turner’s “frontier thesis.” Some echoed it. Some extended it. Some amended it. Through the first half of the 20th century, however, few sought to challenge Turner’s belief in the fundamental importance of the frontier to American development or to question the exaltation of westward expansion.

That has changed over the last half century. Protests against the Vietnam War and the spread of various civil rights movements had a profound impact on the interpretation of American history in general, and western American history in particular. If American expansion led to Vietnam, a conflict that drew frequent metaphorical comparison to the supposed lawless violence of the Wild West, then it was not something to be cheered. At the same time, liberation struggles at home

inspired historians to look beyond the white, male protagonists who had previously dominated frontier epics. In step with other American histories, scholars of the American West turned their attentions to the expectations and experiences of the unsung and the undone.

With a wider cast and an anti-imperial angle of vision, interpretations of the western past veered from the triumphant to the tragic. The titles of the two most influential surveys of what came to be called "the new western history" attested to this shift in orientation: "The Legacy of Conquest" by Patricia Limerick (1987) and "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own" by Richard White (1991). Synthesizing scholarship from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, these books asserted that conquest and its legacy brought misfortunes aplenty to the defeated and even to the supposed victors. The more general misfortunes traced to the environmental blowback that followed efforts to turn the land into what it was not, to transform a mostly arid and sparsely populated region into an agricultural "garden" and a home for multiplying millions of residents.

In the revisionist mirror, the Great West didn't look very great anymore, a gloom and doom view that not all historians, and certainly not all Americans, embraced. Critics claimed the new western history overlooked the achievements and exaggerated the evils of American expansion. The unbalanced exposition, complained the novelist Larry McMurty, unfairly presented the western past as an unrelenting course in "failure studies."

Similar debates erupted among art historians and grabbed much public notice in 1991. That year, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art presented "The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the American Frontier, 1820-1920." In the exhibition, the curators challenged both the realism and the romance of western art. According to the exhibition's gallery guide, the assembled works, which included masterpieces by the most renowned artists of the American West

were “not so much records of activities or places” as they were “a means of persuading people that westward expansion was good for the nation and would benefit all who participated in it.” This proposition put western art and western artists in the service of manifest destiny, an ideology that led painters, sculptors, and photographers to mask “the problems created by westward expansion.”

“The West as America” exhibition was quite controversial. Some visitors limited their vitriol to the comments book in the gallery. Others vented their outrage in op-ed pieces. In response to the uproar, several congressmen demanded that the National Museum of American Art be defunded for allowing this blasphemy to be perpetrated against western art. That campaign failed, but the planned national tour of the exhibition was cancelled.

In terms of public notice, by far the greatest impact of changing views about the history of the American West registered at the movies. The social currents emanating from the 1960s that rewrote western histories and reinterpreted the meaning of still images also dramatically upended the art of motion pictures. For decades, “Westerns” ruled Hollywood. “Epics” and “B-westerns” filled movie theaters from the 1920s to the 1950s—and dominated American television programming in the 1950s. But during the 1960s, traditional, heroic Westerns began losing their popular appeal. Far fewer were produced. Those that were often inverted the genre’s conventions about heroes and villains and the righteousness of violence and manifest destiny. In landmark films such as Sergio Leone’s *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* (1969), Arthur Penn’s *Little Big Man* (1970), and Robert Altman’s *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), the Old West became a stage on which 1960s critiques of American capitalism and imperialism played out. Arguably, though, the reversing of traditional western roles did not reach its apotheosis until 1991 when *Dances with Wolves* won eight Academy Awards.

"Dances with Wolves" reigned at the box office and at the Oscars, but over the last quarter century, the best historical scholarship has aimed at more than mere inversion of old myths about the Old West. One important direction has been to compare and connect what happened in the American West with parallel places and processes elsewhere. Departing from Turner's claim that the frontier set the U.S. apart from its European roots, historians of the American West have instead emphasized the commonalities between American and other "colonialisms." More specifically, the construct of "settler colonialism" has emerged as a key to situating the American experience in a broader global context. Further depriving the American West of its uniqueness, historians have adopted the lens of "ethnic cleansing," or worse "genocide," to understand American expansions and the accompanying displacement and sometimes devastation of indigenous peoples.

The most compelling western histories written in the last quarter century confront the complexities of past and present. This begins with the recognition of how deep that past is, with histories that commence well before the West was American and with excavations that reveal the diversity and dynamism of Native America prior to the arrival of European colonizers. From archaeological and other sources, historians have now recovered rich precolonial worlds and complex societies that continued after Indians encountered people from Europe and Africa, weaving a fascinating new understanding of how natives and newcomers met and mingled.

Rescuing indigenous people from the condescension of New Age romanticism that turns them into ever peaceful, perfect ecologists, newer histories have shown how Indians not only resisted European colonialism, but also in some parts of North America carried out their own expansions. The best of these newer western histories detail as well how prolonged interactions resulted in ethnic crossings as well as ethnic cleansings. Most visibly, this intercourse produced mixed-race

offspring, but historians have also tracked a wide range of exchanges that led to a blending of cultures. Such amalgamations have remained a hallmark of western American cultures in the 20th and now the 21st centuries

The history of the American West, like the art of the American West, isn't what it used to be. No doubt, many lament the changes and pine for the myths that western histories (and western art) once celebrated. But if we are to make sense of the West's multi-faceted evolutions and figure out how we can live together, and live sustainably, in this region, we don't need one-dimensional tales. Rather we need histories and art that respect the past, wrestling, as historians and artists must, with the complexities that challenge us still.

Stephen Aron is a professor of history and Robert N. Burr department chair at UCLA. In 2017, he will be the president of the Western History Association. His most recent book is "The American West: A Very Short Introduction" (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Letter: EDC supervisors don't care about citizens

To the community,

At the Aug. 16, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting, Brian Veerkamp made a motion to extend a property-tax subsidy to incentivize seniors to move into El Dorado County. He justified this subsidy, known as Proposition 90, by stating that he must also represent Realtors, not just citizens.

It was apparent from the discussion that the greatest

benefactors from the decision will be production home builders such as Lennar Homes, the county Board of Realtors, and seniors moving from the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Three supervisors felt that because these seniors have more discretionary funds to throw around, it justifies the subsidy to entice them to move to El Dorado County.

My opinion is that this will continue to keep the market inflated and continue to make it hard for young families to stay here. As one Realtor pointed out last month, he witnessed a Prop. 90 recipient create and win a price war on a house because of their advantage using the Prop. 90 subsidy. Supervisor Veerkamp attempted to lay the housing inequality on the feet of those that have fought to retain the rural character of El Dorado County. It was mentioned that if they could just put in more high-density housing apartments along the corridor, young families might have more of a chance. Economics tell us that when you give someone a discount on paying their fair share for services, that discount has to be made up by somebody. It was made pretty clear at the meeting that three of our supervisors feel very strongly about who they will be favoring, this does nothing for existing residents and businesses.

Supervisor (Sue) Novasel stated that she disagreed that there was not a benefit since these new seniors will be spending money and adding to the sales tax, even though everyone admitted that there is no data to prove that statement. Maybe living in Tahoe, Supervisor Novasel does not realize that the homes being sold (mostly high priced by Lennar Homes) are located a hop and a skip from a massive amount of retail in Folsom. Well, I guess Folsom should be happy, but it's a sad day when our supervisors favor out of town affluent seniors over our struggling young families.

Sue Taylor, Camino

Opinion: Need to create an oceans policy

By David Helvarg, Sierra

Thirty-three years ago, President Ronald Reagan established the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), stretching 200 miles out from our shores. At 3.4 million square miles, it's more extensive than our continental landmass.

But unlike our lands, our public seas belong to all of us, and right now they are in trouble. The ocean is at risk from a cascading series of environmental disasters including industrial overfishing, pollution, loss of coastal and offshore habitats, and climate change.

Faced with these threats, it's hard to fathom why this crisis in our seas has received no attention in the 2016 presidential campaigns. Hillary Clinton has pledged not to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean or off the Atlantic coast but has no position on the Gulf of Mexico, where 17 percent of domestic oil production takes place. By calling the science of climate change a hoax, Donald Trump has made it clear that he'd be unlikely to address climate-linked ocean threats such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, and harmful algae blooms intensified by warming ocean waters—such as we're now seeing on the coasts of Florida.

Read the whole story

Letter: Commission didn't listen regarding Squaw

To the community,

Sadly, Placer County Planning Commission approved the huge **KSL Squaw Valley project** last Thursday by a 4-2 vote. Local Larry Sevison voted to approve.

Not one change was made to the behemoth project – 1,400-plus bedrooms, numerous 96-foot buildings, 18 homes at the base of the Shirley Lake trail, and a 96-foot building containing a water park.

The commissioner that made the motion didn't make a peep the entire 10-hour hearing ... he just made the motion to approve, ignoring scores of environmental impacts. Placer County's attorney claimed the county could ignore California Attorney General Kamala Harris' letter requesting a new environmental analysis due to traffic, greenhouse gas and impacts to Lake Tahoe. It was a shameful display.

We were told KSL offered to pay employees to attend and offered them more if they spoke. Teresa Duggan organized the KSL circus.

Next will be the Board of Supervisors. Write Jennifer Montgomery – jmontgomery@placer.ca.gov – and tell her to deny Squaw Valley and Martis Valley West. Our area is at gridlock during high season now; add Squaw Valley, Martis Valley West, Highlands 2, Joerger Ranch, The Railyard, Brockway Campground, Homewood, Boulder Bay, Coldstream ... it goes on and on. Our area will be ruined.

By the way, the water park will offer indoor skydiving ... really?

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance