

# Opinion: Attacks on LGBT community common

By Melissa Batchelor Warnke, Los Angeles Times

Three years ago, Mark Carson was walking with a friend in Greenwich Village, the Manhattan neighborhood that birthed the contemporary LGBT movement. It was a Friday night in early spring; they wore cut-off shorts and cowboy boots. When they turned a corner onto West 8th Street, a group of men appeared behind them.

“What are you, gay wrestlers?” one taunted. “F--t!” another yelled. “Queer.” Finally, one asked the question Carson would never get to answer: “Do you want to die here?” He shot Carson in the face with a .38-caliber revolver. Carson, who died from his injuries, was the fifth openly gay man to be violently attacked in Manhattan in a span of just three weeks. In court, his killer, Elliot Morales, claimed to have acted in self-defense. The defense characterized Morales as “self-loathing,” highlighting his fraught romantic relationship with a transgender woman.

A year later, Ali Muhammad Brown used the gay and bisexual dating app Grindr to lure two men to meet him outside of R Place, a popular gay bar in Seattle. Less than 17 minutes after picking them up, he had killed both execution-style in his car. Brown said his mission was “vengeance” for the U.S. killings in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. He described himself as a jihadi.

In the wake of the horrific attack on the Pulse club in Orlando, the motivations of gunman Omar Mateen will be dissected ad nauseum. The information we have right now points to an increasingly complex case, with myriad potential social and political motivations. International terrorism, however,

is on the lips of politicians and pundits after it was revealed that Mateen pledged his fealty to ISIS. Whatever the particularities of this case, however, the reality is that the threat and realization of violence against the LGBT community are not isolated to a lone Florida club. The scope of the Orlando attack was shocking, but acts of violence against the LGBT community are disturbingly common.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: Importance of being fire safe**

**By Joanne Marchetta**

June is wildfire awareness month at Lake Tahoe. And nine years later, the 2007 Angora Fire remains a vivid reminder that wildfire is one of the greatest threats facing our environment, our homes, and our businesses. We must prepare accordingly.



Joanne  
Marchetta

Our region continues to take important steps to manage that wildfire threat, improve the health of our forests, and create

fire adapted communities that are prepared for the next wildfire at Tahoe. But there is more work to do.

Last winter's snowpack brought much-needed moisture to our region. But wildfire risk in the Sierra Nevada is greater than ever. Literally millions of acres of forests to our south are a sea of standing brown casualties. Forests are seeing unprecedented tree mortality because of drought and beetle infestations—major challenges that add fuel to our wildfire risk and will only increase as our climate continues to warm.

Adding to these challenges, past logging practices and a century of wildfire suppression have left our forests unnaturally thick and overgrown and at greater risk for catastrophic wildfire once a fire ignites.

We are not alone in facing this threat. Throughout the American West, wildfires are burning at intensities and sizes never before seen. A fire with the magnitude of the recent Rim or King fires would devastate our watershed, our forests, and our communities at Lake Tahoe.

TRPA, CalFire, the U.S. Forest Service, local fire protection districts, and other agencies on the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team are working together to prevent such wildfires, implementing projects to reduce hazardous fuel loads in our forests to restore our region to a natural cycle where smaller, lower-intensity wildfires can perform their important ecological functions but not burn out of control.

By coordinating projects and working together, the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team has reduced hazardous fuels on more than 60,000 of the 117,000 acres of forest surrounding our communities. We are working to treat the rest of this high-risk wildland urban interface over the next five to 10 years, and to develop a strategy to scale up these fuel reduction projects to treat other more remote areas in the Tahoe Basin.

This work by public agencies is crucial for forest health and

resiliency in the face of our warming climate. Residents and visitors too have equally important roles to play in wildfire prevention and preparedness and the creation of fire adapted communities.

More than 90 percent of wildfires at Lake Tahoe are human caused and easily preventable with a little care. A new outreach campaign launching this month asks everyone, residents and visitors, to “Think First to Keep Tahoe Fire Safe.” The campaign reminds all of us that there are simple steps we can and must take to prevent and prepare for the next wildfire at Lake Tahoe.

To the millions of people who visit our region to enjoy its natural splendor and limitless outdoor recreation opportunities, first and foremost, please remember you are visiting a fire-prone area. Be responsible with campfires. Enjoy them only where and when they are allowed, keep a watchful eye on them, and make sure they are put out.

To all our residents and second homeowners, please work with your local fire department to create adequate defensible space around your homes. TRPA supports all properties having defensible space, so please rake up leaves and pine needles, clear out brush and ladder fuels, clean your roofs, and upgrade your homes with ignition-resistant materials as much as possible. And don't forget, we all need a family plan to evacuate before the need arises.

As summer arrives at Tahoe, please visit the **new website** to learn more about wildfire prevention and preparedness and find links to important information. Sign the pledge to “Think First to Keep Tahoe Fire Safe” and share the information with your family and friends and neighbors. The time to prevent and prepare for the next wildfire is now.

The Angora Fire in 2007 showed what one illegal, unattended campfire can do at Lake Tahoe. Thin wisps of smoke quickly

grew into billowing clouds with ash and falling embers as the wildfire spread, burning 3,100 acres of forest, destroying more than 250 homes, and causing millions of dollars in property damage. We know we live in an area with a natural wildfire hazard, and we know how that hazard can quickly materialize with grave consequences for our environment and our communities. Let's continue to work together to "Think First to Keep Tahoe Fire Safe" and prepare for that risk as best we can.

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

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## **Opinion: Grand jury catches up with Combs**

**By Larry Weitzman**

About six months ago I wrote a **column** about our former CAO, Larry Combs, getting he and all his Sutter cronies (including former DA Carl Adams) a 50 percent pension increase. Combs took his annual pension from about \$120K to about \$188K and Adams' from about \$105K to about \$145K. But what I didn't know is that it was done in violation of at least four Government Code statutes.

But all this was revealed in a Sutter County Grand Jury report issued May 18. First, even with opposition from the then county auditor, CPA Robert Stark, who was a pension analyst with California for 10 years prior to becoming Sutter County auditor, this pension increase was rammed through by Combs via the consent calendar, which violates proper procedure of an open hearing for such matters.



Larry Weitzman

During what little discussion there was, Combs said it would cost the county about \$11 million. Stark said it would be at least double. According to grand jury records, unfunded liabilities went from about \$11 million in 2003, the year before, to a 2014 level of \$111 million in 10 years. Combs looks to have told a whopper.

Before any pension increases are allowed, there are four specific Government Code sections that need to be complied with which are 7507, 23026, 31515.5 and 31516, the nuts and bolts of which provide that the county shall provide an actuarial statement on future costs (sec. 7507). That was not provided by an actuarial. Second, it must be provided and posted two weeks before a scheduled open public hearing for any change in pensions (7507).

The other sections also provide notice procedures by the Board of Supervisors and time requirements plus an analysis of the pension changes and explanation of the of the financial impact that the proposed benefit changes will have on the funding status of the county employees' retirement. There are more but absolutely none of the Government Code sections were complied with. Combs intentional violated the code sections

In fact, CAO Larry Combs pushed through the increase in retirement benefits of which the biggest benefactor was Larry Combs, with DA Carl Adams not far behind. The unfunded pension liability has increased by tenfold. There are serious financial problems for Sutter County caused by Combs' greed and it's all in a 2015-16 five-page Sutter County Grand Jury

report.

Combs quits Sutter in 2009 and went to Merced County where he didn't last two years as he tried to take over as their CAO. It didn't happen, however. An example of which could be summarized by an exchange in 2010 reported by the Modesto Bee. Merced County 4th District Supervisor Deidre Kelsey at a board meeting asked for a performance review of Combs, saying with respect to Combs that his actions "brings into question who works for whom in Merced County." It was a stern four-minute lecture about "poor communications, a lack of budgetary information and the creation of new policies outside of negotiations with the county's union." Sound familiar?

Kelsey went on in the Bee, "What has happened to the board setting such policy decisions as our health care plan? ... When did this board make a decision regarding superagencies? Apparently there is someone out there discussing combining departments into a super agencies and this Board has never had an agendized discussion regarding this matter," she continued. "Again, I ask, who is sailing this ship?"

Combs had signed a four-year contract at a salary of \$205K with a six-month buy-out clause. The BOS couldn't take him any more after about another year and bought him out. And this is only scratching the surface about Combs. He controlled Sutter with an iron fist until they threw him out. Merced saw the light quickly as what he did in Sutter.

So how did we end up with Combs with respect to his track record being all over the Internet? You can thank HR Director Pam Knorr, who highly recommended Combs to the board with individual meetings. A few months ago I asked 3rd District Supervisor Brian Veerkamp was there a proper and thorough background check done on Combs. He assured me there was. If there were a background, it was at best cursory. And that's how we ended up with Combs. Thank you Pam Knorr. If we had a real HR director, Combs would never had happened.

And what happened in Sutter County? Combs got his buddy the DA to file bogus charges against the auditor who protested his pension scheme. After Stark, the auditor, spent over \$400K of his own money the case was dismissed. Combs spent more in the prosecution, including misappropriation of about \$100K of anti-drug task force funds. Now he collects pensions totaling almost \$220K and skates free. He should be living in the graybar hotel. One other question. Why does Knorr still have a job in EDC.

At least we have Don Ashton to put it all back together. It's a heavy load.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*

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## **Opinion: Remembering South Shore's World Cup**

**By Garry Bowen**

With Friday's announcement of a World Cup event returning to Squaw Valley next spring, another World Cup a long time ago triggered thoughts of another commemoration, that of our own Spider Sabich, whose No. 1 World Cup victory was right here at Heavenly in April 1968.

His fate was not so immortal, as a number of years later (spring 1976), he was shot to death in Aspen by Claudine Longet, wife of Andy Williams, in a controversial "accident" that was also marred by forensic mistakes that obviated prosecution attempts. She was summarily convicted of negligent homicide, serving a very limited sentence and a small fine in the Pitkin County courthouse/jail in downtown Aspen.





Garry Bowen

As a local, Sabich need not be forgotten as we continue to honor our three gold-medal women, all from Meyers, as he was from just a bit farther away, Kyburz, and skied the same mountain area that brought their skills to the fore in such spectacular fashion. He learned to ski at the now defunct Edelweiss (now Camp Sacramento). His father was the California highway patrolman along the Highway 50 corridor, using his patrol car to take the Sabich kids (his older sister Mary, Spider, Vladimir Jr.) and his younger brother, Steve (known as Pinky) to their ski lessons just a few miles down the road from Sierra Ski Ranch (the original name of the now renowned Sierra-at-Tahoe), where Hannah Teter, Jamie Anderson and Maddie Bowman came to such well-earned prominence.

This writer has a personal attachment to memorializing Sabich, as in earlier years, I rode with Spider and his sister Mary each and every day on the school bus to El Dorado High in Placerville for a school year, not an insignificant trip (each way) given Kyburz's distance (and Whitehall, my domicile just prior to South Shore) from our county seat.

In that year, and subsequently, Sabich kept in local touch, particularly in the ski realm, as the FIS (Federation Internationale du Ski) and World Cup attention brought recognition to Tahoe's ski world, and we both had familial contact with the Rothgeb family, who lived next door to the Kuraisa's on Saddle Road above the California Lodge. Chris Kuraisa was one of the founders of Heavenly Valley, and the Rothgeb family effectively ran Heavenly: Wally Sr. the mountain operations, Wally Jr. on the U.S. Ski Team and a

contemporary of mine, with mom Betty running Heavenly's business side.

When Sabich came to town, myself, Wally Jr., John Marchini Sr. and a few others would socialize at either the Christiana (now Himmel Haus), as it was built by Peter Brinkman, head of Heavenly's ski school and a couple of brothers from Santa Cruz in the summer of 1965 – or at Harrah's, as Bill Harrah sponsored some FIS events, including the FIS South Shore Room dinner honoring Sabich's World Cup first place win.

Many treasured memories can accrue from an event like the one Squaw Valley has secured for the coming spring, as Squaw Valley's Andy Wirth stated in the *San Francisco Chronicle* recognizing the World Cup as "the single most prestigious event you can host at a ski resort."

My desire to honor one-of-our-own, the ill-fated Spider Sabich, was fueled by the excited knowledge of what that prestige might bring to the area, spurred on by the subsequent wins that Hannah, Jamie, Julia (Mancuso), and Maddie have accomplished, these many years after Spider's No. 1 World Cup win, right here on South Shore.

To not remember the great Spider Sabich would miss adding a humble luster to all of our ongoing skiing efforts, as he would be one of the first to congratulate those accomplishments were he still with us.

*Garry Bowen has more than a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health.*

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# Letter: Meyers resident wants TRPA to respond

**Publisher's note:** *This letter was sent to the executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and reprinted with permission.*

Dear Ms. [Joanne] Marchetta

This is with regard to the Tahoe Hockey Academy (THA) proposal, up for a public hearing on the TRPA Governing Board June 22 general agenda.

About a month ago our Christmas Valley neighbors learned of the proposed hockey-rink-cum-high school intended for the bottom of Old Meyers Grade, and that it had already been at least partially approved through the county's permitting process. This came as a shock to all of us, as we are located right in this area, but had no idea. We learned only by happenstance from an **online news source** that this project was in the works, permits issued, and was evidently on its way to the TRPA for a "final review."

Local residents like myself are anxious for some clarity, re just what is being authorized with this proposal, and via what process, exactly. To say the least, its progress through El Dorado County's permitting channels has been covert and swift. It took some research to uncover any info at all about this "academy," as even residents closest to the site had not been noticed. Below is what we've learned:

- The proposal is to establish a boarding school for up to 100 high school students.
- This is to be a 24/7 business complex with additional structures that so far include housing for 100 students plus staff, an ice rink for hockey competitions,

basketball and tennis courts, and stadium lighting. Other development is yet to be determined.

· A large parking lot is planned, to accommodate the many vehicles that presumably won't interfere at all with local traffic, pedestrians or animals. (This would be the supposition, if an impact study could be located, but so far that particular search has yielded nothing).

Despite the significance of this "proposal," information has been challenging to uncover, and muddled when we do. The above facts came from the THA website, which has now been sealed. A still further example of misdirection, the actual identity of the THA is a moving target. The THA is also known as the Lake Tahoe Hockey Academy, LTHA, and the California Hockey Academy, or CHA. The obfuscation alone raises some obvious questions. Given the tax and fee benefits for the county and TRPA, the answers may be equally obvious, but I think our community would appreciate your response.

Specifically, how is it that a grades 9-12 boarding school with a hockey rink was allowed to process through the county's permitting system as a "recreational (that is, day-use) facility?" As if a picnic area with a few tables was up for approval? And why is this proposal, now that some pertinent facts have been dragged to light, still being treated by TRPA as legitimate business? Has there been an environmental impact study? It's clear that this proposal should either be resubmitted with valid information and the appropriate impact research, or better yet, permanently tabled.

On its website the TRPA promotes itself as "A Voice for Lake Tahoe." Good, because Meyers is part of Lake Tahoe, and our community is hoping that you and TRPA will use that voice to protect our idyllic neighborhood from the threat of a school/competitive sport facility materializing on top of us. TRPA's stated purpose to "Insure an equilibrium between the Region's natural endowment and its manmade environment" seems

formulated to mandate intervention in exactly this kind of struggle. We are hopeful that our rural quality of life here will be spared a ribbon-cutting festival at the bottom of Old Meyers Grade.

I speak for many when I say that we are in hopes that you will help us.

**Audrey Morrow, Christmas Valley**

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## **Editorial: Orlando the latest in a horrific parade of violence**

***Publisher's note: This editorial is from the June 12, 2016, Los Angeles Times.***

The murder of at least 50 people in Orlando early Sunday was an act of terrorism, pure and simple. It appears to have been driven by Islamic extremism and anti-gay sentiment, and yes, once again, a gun designed for no other purpose than to kill a large number of people in a short amount of time was central to the crime.

The killings occurred near closing time of a nightclub that caters to the LGBT community, when Omar Mateen – reportedly a New York native who was living in the Fort Pierce area, 120 miles north of Miami – entered with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle and let loose in a barrage that lasted, as one of the survivors said, a song's length of time. It was the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, moving instantly to the top of a list that roils the stomach. Over the next

few days, investigators will try to understand the dangerous interplay of religious fundamentalism, gay hatred and whatever other motivations drove Mateen to his demented actions.

It should go without saying that not all Muslims should be blamed for the acts of fanatics and fundamentalists. That remains as true as ever. Sunday's tragedy also shows that the Obama administration has been right to view Islamic State not as some far-away militia that poses no threat to the U.S., but as a dangerous group whose hostility to this country can have immediate and terrible consequences.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: Why 70% of kids quit sports by age 13**

**By Julianna W. Miner, Washington Post**

According to a poll from the National Alliance for Youth Sports, about 70 percent of kids in the United States stop playing organized sports by the age of 13 because "it's just not fun anymore."

I have three kids, all of whom play sports, and my oldest is about to turn 13. I may not have understood why this was happening a few years ago, but sadly, knowing what I know now, the mass exodus of 13-year-olds from organized sports makes perfect sense to me.

"It's not fun anymore" isn't the problem; it's a consequence of a number of cultural, economic and systemic issues that result in our kids turning away from organized sports at a

time when they could benefit from them the most. Playing sports offers everything from physical activity, experiencing success and bouncing back from failure to taking calculated risks and dealing with the consequences to working as a team and getting away from the ubiquitous presence of screens.

Our middle-schoolers need sports now more than ever.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Letter: Judge appreciative of continued support**

**To the community,**

I would like to sincerely thank the voters of El Dorado County for your support in last Tuesday's election. I cannot adequately express my thanks for the honor of serving you on the El Dorado County Superior Court. I appreciate your trust in re-electing me and I will do my very best to serve all of the citizens of El Dorado County.

As a judge I see my role to be dedicated to upholding the law and applying it fairly, without prejudice or preference. I believe that our judicial system must provide a respectful, efficient, no-nonsense forum for the fair and equitable resolution of disputes.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the people of El Dorado County as your Superior Court judge and I will continue to exhibit the qualities of fairness and equality throughout my tenure on the court. Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,

# Letter: Appreciation for EDC voters

To the community,

Save Our County, Residents Involved in Positive Planning, and the Shingle Springs Community Alliance would like to thank the voters of El Dorado County for the adoption of Measure E. Measure E retains a new and improved 1998 Measure Y while sending a clear message that projects which create gridlock on our roads will not be tolerated.

Measure G lost by a slim margin, informing the Board of Supervisors that it is not just a "small" group of residents that want our resources, rural character, and quality of life protected, as promised in the voter-approved 2004 General Plan.

The "no" campaign by Parker Development, the Farm Bureau, Alliance for Responsible Planning, and the Winery Association promised to protect our open space, farms, wineries, rural economy, local jobs, worms, water, roads, rural quality of life, schools, public safety, fire protection, small businesses, our children, and seniors.

In light of those campaign promises we would expect to find common ground with the opposing groups when we ask the Board of Supervisors to stop ruling in favor of projects that violate our General Plan. Rather than wasting public and private resources by forcing lawsuits, the supervisors should stand with the people of El Dorado County in demanding that



the required policies that protect our historical, cultural, agricultural, recreational, and natural resources finally be put in place.

We would like to express a special appreciation to the many individuals, business owners, farmers, and ranchers who have spent their time and energy to spread the word about the importance of protecting our rural quality of life.

Additionally, thank you to the many community groups that supported our shared cause, including Citizens for Sensible Development in El Dorado Hills, Friends of Historic Hangtown, Georgetown Preservation Society, our friends in Meyers, and especially Rural Communities United (RCU).

When the current Board of Supervisors recently overhauled our General Plan and Zoning Ordinance to favor higher-density, urban-type development, RCU was quick to take the lead in a lawsuit designed to stop the county from its abuse of “discretionary” power. We encourage everyone to support RCU with donations to fund the lawsuit that will further restore the voter-approved 2004 General Plan.

Supplemental information can be found at this [website](#).

**Sue Taylor, Save Our County**

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## **Letter: Restoration Day a success on South Shore**

**To the community,**

On June 4, community members gathered to restore and stabilize the banks of the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe as

part of Restoration Day – a new annual day of environmental restoration organized by the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

“We are grateful to all of our volunteers, as well as our partners with the city of South Lake Tahoe, the California Tahoe Conservancy and the California Conservation Corps,” said Marilee Movius, the League’s community engagement manager. “It’s great to see everyone coming together to restore the natural environment of the Upper Truckee River and protect Lake Tahoe’s clarity.”

Participants in Saturday’s Restoration Day event helped protect 363 native plants along 3,650 feet of stream bank of the Upper Truckee River near Lake Tahoe Airport in South Lake Tahoe. This stretch of river has been the subject of a number of restoration efforts in recent years, including last year’s Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day. The restoration of stream bank vegetation provides habitat for wildlife and prevents erosion that clouds the water and degrades Lake clarity.

“Revegetation has been challenging during the recent drought years, and this work will enable the young native plants to become more established and able to survive on their own,” said Jason Burke, stormwater program coordinator for South Lake Tahoe. “The volunteer day also provides everyone the opportunity to get outside and check on the success of the larger effort to restore this section of the river.”

Volunteers used shovels to build berms around recently-planted wood rose plants – the extra berm will help the plants capture and retain more rainfall during the summer. Participants also applied mulch around the plants and gave them a little extra water from the river to help them make it through the drier months.

“The efforts by the volunteers on Saturday are so important. It’s vital to revisit restoration sites multiple times after the initial work to ensure that plants survive and we get the

intended restoration needed to protect the environment,” said Jen Greenberg, an environmental planner with the California Tahoe Conservancy.

“The hard work by Saturday’s volunteers will help the streamside plants survive and thrive in the summer heat, which will help continue to improve the condition of this reach of the Upper Truckee River, ultimately helping to prevent erosion and keep fine sediment from making its way to Lake Tahoe,” said Zack Bradford, the League’s natural resources manager.

As a thank you for their efforts to protect Lake Tahoe, Ernie’s Coffee Shop of South Lake Tahoe provided each volunteer a voucher good for a free meal at their restaurant.

**Jesse Patterson, Lake to Save Lake Tahoe deputy director**