

# Opinion: Media's prediction addiction is anti-democratic

By Andres Martinez

Many journalists are confessing that they really blew with a series of poor predictions – dismissing Trump, calling for an early Clinton coronation, anticipating a contested GOP convention – instead of apologizing for their real sin: the compulsive haste to predict everything in the first place.

People have long harrumphed about how polls dominate election coverage at the expense of substantive reporting of policy proposals. What is new is the extent to which the media's obsession with predicting electoral outcomes in advance has seeped into the candidates' own discourse on the campaign trail.

It's as if sideline analysis has become the game itself.

Trump is the caricature extreme of this trend, giving campaign speeches that consist largely of spinning poll numbers and critiquing the media coverage of the campaign. But Trump isn't alone. To an extent previously unimaginable, all candidates this election cycle have spent a fair amount of time discussing polls. Even when they didn't want to talk polls, they were often forced to do so by the media, which promote their own surveys and fetishize polling data –“Why are you running given such low poll numbers?”

This was the tenor of the campaign coverage even before the first votes were cast in Iowa. Such is the anti-democratic hubris of media elites: Why wait to let people make their choice on election day when we smart media folks can tell you the results in advance, and tell you why you and your neighbors voted the way you did?

These apologies are more disturbing than the mistaken predictions. The apologizers genuinely seem to think their inability to predict this primary season accurately was a blow to the republic –as opposed to their insistence on allowing their prediction addiction to drive, and distort, most election coverage.

Society's intolerance of uncertainty (the media are playing to its audience, after all) and our mania for perfecting forecasting expands well beyond political reporting and analysis. Meteorology, the science we first think of when we think of "forecasting," is a pursuit where less uncertainty is a societal good. You want to warn people to abandon the coastline if an epic hurricane is heading their way. Blown climate predictions do deserve mea culpas– and there's no positive interest in waiting to see where the hurricane will land, and withholding judgment.

The financial world, on the other hand, is an arena long ago perverted by data-driven forecasting. When you invest your savings in a publicly traded company these days, you're not making a bet on how that company will perform objectively in the long run. You are betting on how its performance in quarterly short-terms will compare with the forecasts drawn up by Wall Street analysts. It's not enough to await a company's results; what matters is how those results conform, or don't, to the earnings estimates (or "expectations") imposed on it by outside data crunchers. For instance, in April, Wall Street threw a collective hissy fit when Apple "missed" expectations set by outside forecasters by reporting \$50.56 billion instead of \$51.97 billion in quarterly revenue. The company's stock was taken down 8 percent in a day.

For companies trading on the stock market, the tyranny of managing a business to meet the quarterly earnings expectations of outside forecasters end up stifling innovation and risk-taking. It's the financial equivalent of campaigning on your poll numbers instead of setting your own agenda.

Perhaps the world of political analysis should look to the world of sports for a healthier model of how to blend forecasting with substantive analysis, without allowing the former to overwhelm the latter. Sports journalists and fans love making predictions, and devote a great deal of airtime and print (not to mention fantasy league energy) to picking scores and predicting individual performances. But, maybe because it's still a game in the end, there is more allowance made for the notion that ironclad certitude is elusive, undesirable even. Studio broadcast analysts keep track of the accuracy of their predictions and good-naturedly compete and tease each other over them. But failed predictions don't trigger weighty mea culpas about how media let society down[SC1] .

The longest shot ever recorded by odds makers happened in the world of soccer last month, when tiny, impoverished and perennially struggling FC Leicester won the English Premier League, despite 5,000-to-1 odds. The story was a feel-good global phenomenon. The political media-operative complex should take note. Smart analysis can help explain how Leicester pulled off its championship, without having predicted it in advance. Some uncertainty is inevitable in life, at least until the games are played, and the votes are cast. And that's OK.

*Andrés Martínez writes the Trade Winds column for Zócalo Public Square, where he is editorial director. He is also professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University and a fellow at New America.*

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# Letter: Hockey school doesn't belong in Meyers

To the community,

I must rebut what is being portrayed as “negative” and “uninformed” residents. The *Lake Tahoe News* article about the Meyers hockey academy states, “When the notice about the project went out to neighbors this month...” The fact is we received absolutely no notice, which is why we are uninformed. The proposal just happened to be seen by someone that regularly watches the TRPA agenda, only a few days in advance of the hearing.

Our neighborhood falls just outside the Meyers Area Plan of January 2014. The proposed project is only about 1,500 feet away and is approximately 100 feet higher in elevation from the residential uses in Tahoe Par 60. The project is close enough to have direct impacts, yet the developer and TRPA did not provide due notice.

JJ (the developer) mentions in his comment that he did his research. The community would not be so objectionable if the proponents did not fly under the radar as they did. It was quietly approved by the Board of Supervisors in Placerville using old permits, then placed on the consent calendar of the TRPA to be heard on the North Shore. Paul Nielsen, planner with TRPA, stated, “It’s on the consent calendar because until recently there was no known concerns about the project.” This certainly does not portray transparency nor community interest.

The main concerns are A) the lack of proper notice; B) the traffic impacts to residents that already cannot get onto Highway 50 during peak traffic to conduct daily life; C) the noise level and light emissions from an outdoor facility; and

D) non-conforming use. These directly impact our quiet lifestyle chosen by the residents out here. To be part of a community, one must include the community.

Further, TRPA's staff summary states, "the proposed project is a recreational group facility which is a permissible use in Plan Area Statement 136. There are no classrooms proposed as part of this project." Yet in this article and many other news and online forums show the project is a school, such as the following quotes. "We are looking at initiation on the upper dorm as early as June and the first academic year starting in August" and "The academy will follow the school year – August to May. Then the facility will operate summer camps for groups of 20 to 25 kids," Dill said. "Basically it's a prep school and prep academy to get them academically ready for college and physically ready to play Division 1 hockey."

It sure sounds like a school to me. Therefore the project is not consistent with the adopted Plan Area Statements for Plans 136 and 137.

It seems the residents in Christmas Valley are again ignored by the decision-makers. The only time we are valued is when we have to pay our share of something.

**Jeffrey Spencer, Meyers**

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**Opinion: Calif. housing shortage sets up battle over**

# Land-use control

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Once upon a time, California city officials used two tools to shape how their communities evolved – setting property tax rates and controlling land use.



Dan Walters

The former vanished when voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978, not only cutting property taxes by more than half, but sharply limiting future tax bites.

In response, city officials relied more on land use to keep their municipal engines running – aggressively seeking profitable development, such as sales tax-generating retail complexes, and using, or misusing, “redevelopment” to subsidize favored developers.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: Tahoe Fund launches**

# venture trust

By Amy Berry

Taking a page from the playbook of venture capitalists in Silicon Valley, the Tahoe Fund has announced plans to create an Environmental Venture Trust to seed early stage environmental improvement projects at Lake Tahoe with philanthropic capital. Unlike traditional venture capital, the return on investment for the trust will be purely environmental and not financial. The Environmental Venture Trust will help kick-start projects with seed funding to reduce project timelines and to better prepare them for future investments.

This is a new initiative for the Tahoe Fund, which is focused on raising private funds for environmental improvement projects that help restore lake clarity, improve outdoor recreation, and inspire greater stewardship of Lake Tahoe.

“We see a lot of great projects sit on the sidelines because they can’t find the initial funding to get things started,” said Art Chapman, chair of the Tahoe Fund. “With this innovative approach to philanthropy, we think we can give life to a lot of great projects that will have a tremendous impact on the long-term health of Lake Tahoe.”

Traditionally, the Tahoe Fund supports late-stage projects to close funding gaps or act as a required match for public funding. For example, supporters of the Tahoe Fund leveraged a \$12.5 million federal grant for a new bike path from Incline to Sand Harbor with more than \$1 million in donations. These late-stage projects will continue to be the main focus of the Tahoe Fund.

The new venture trust program was inspired by donors who expressed interest in funding worthy early-stage projects that need help getting off the ground. For instance, donors

provided the early funding for the regional stewardship campaign, Take Care, and for the early restoration work of the Incline Flume Trail. The Tahoe Fund acknowledges that the Environmental Venture Trust carries a higher level of risk than its standard funding model. Donors comfortable with this approach will be able to direct funds to the trust specifically for this purpose.

By providing seed funding to early stage projects, the risk exists that these projects may not make it to the finish line. It is a risk the board feels is worth taking.

“If we can take some small bets on a series of projects, we think we can see some significant gains for Tahoe,” said Tahoe Fund board member and venture capitalist Steven Merrill. “It is time to take this successful funding model from the business world to the philanthropic world to see how we can move the needle for our environment.”

The Tahoe Fund Projects Committee will identify projects and vet their potential and risk once the new Environmental Venture Trust achieves its initial campaign goal of \$100,000 in donations. Information on how to submit a project for consideration will be made available at that time.

The Tahoe Fund will announce its 2016 Premier and Signature projects in early summer.

They will include opportunities for private donors to help acquire 200 acres of property on the Basin’s most impaired watershed, construction of a new overlook at the Basin’s most visited interpretive center, trail reconstruction on one of Tahoe’s favorite hiking trails, and a new section of the Lake Tahoe Bikeway.

Donors interested in contributing to the Environmental Venture Trust or one of the Premier or Signature projects can email [info@tahoefund.org](mailto:info@tahoefund.org) or call me at 775.338.1668.



*Amy Berry is executive director of the Tahoe Fund. This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth.*

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# **Opinion: Time to get rid of the TSA**

**By Adam Minter, Bloomberg**

This spring, millions of Americans have learned to dread going to the airport. An unfortunate combination of surging passenger volumes and declining numbers of screeners have led to security lines that can average over an hour in length.

Thousands of passengers are missing flights daily. Meanwhile, airports and airlines across the U.S. are struggling to contain passenger anger. In desperation this month, one leading U.S. airline trade group asked passengers to troll the Transportation Security Administration by tweeting photos of long lines with the hashtag #ihatethewait.

While no doubt satisfying, such stunts aren't going to speed up security checks before the upcoming summer travel rush. This problem has been years in the making. To solve it, the government may have to get the TSA out of the screening business altogether.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Letter: Bread & Broth thankful for Kirkwood**

**To the community,**

Members of Kirkwood Mountain Resort's human resources team were on hand to help the Bread & Broth volunteers serve the guests at Kirkwood's sponsorship dinner May 4 at St. Theresa Grace Hall.

Representing their fellow HR team members were Becca Hamm, supervisor; Christine Avenett, assistant; Angela Eckhardt, talent acquisitions manager; Eric Davidson, director; and Chris Crushkowsky, manager.

"We had a fantastic time volunteering," commented Crushkowsky. "You B&B volunteers are wonderful, courteous, happy and selfless. Thank you for serving others."

B&B would also like to extend thanks to the Kirkwood team for their help and spirit of service they displayed at their sponsorship dinner. B&B would also like to give a special thanks to Vail Resorts and their Vail EpicPromise Grant program for the funding provided to sponsor the 12 Adopt A Day of Nourishment hosted by Kirkwood and Heavenly mountain resorts annually.

B&B truly appreciates our partnership with the local Vail Resorts and the truly great team members that volunteer at each of their sponsorship dinners. Serving our Monday night dinners would not be possible without the support of our incredible sponsors.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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# **Editorial: Human stupidity endangering wildlife**

**Publisher's note:** *This editorial is from the May 16, 2016, Los Angeles Times.*

Those shaggy-haired, shoulder-humped bison roaming Yellowstone National Park have lived in the area since prehistoric times, surviving migration, predators, disease, development.

But can they survive tourists? Despite signs in the park and fliers handed out to visitors warning them about being gored by the horned bison, tourists just can't seem to stay the officially required 25 yards away.

But wild creatures need to be left alone – if not for our survival then certainly for theirs.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Letter: STMS students help at Bread & Broth**

**To the community,**

Bread & Broth would like to thank and acknowledge Club Live. Club Live is a program for middle school students that promotes a healthy life style through leadership events, recreational trips and community service projects. Under the

guidance of Larry Lambdin and Beth Aiton, the program's co-advisors, five members of the club helped serve at the Club Live's Adopt A Day of Nourishment on May 16.

In addition to helping pack the food giveaway bags, serving drinks and desserts and helping with the dinner's cleanup, the very helpful and eager Club Live members provided toothbrushes, tooth paste and other personal items to supplement food given out at the dinner. Representing Club Live at their sponsorship dinner were members Vesenia Garcia, Katie Ramirez, Anahi Robles, Rose Torres and Delia Zepeda and co-sponsor Paula Lambdin.

"This was a great experience for Club Live," said Larry Lambdin, co-sponsor for the dinner. "We always enjoy it. A couple of my kids were really nervous at first, but became very comfortable as the afternoon went on. One student even asked if we could come back and do it again."

B&B looks forward to partnering with Club Live again and applauds the positive impact the program has on the lives of our community's children.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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## **Opinion: Placer County ignoring residents' concerns**

**By Alexis Ollar**

The May 12 North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council hearing was a testament to how the public process can fail.

The Martis Valley West Parcel project was on the agenda and

the room was packed with community members from Truckee and North Lake Tahoe. Placer County presented the project and made the assertion that MVWP is surrounded by existing development, placing it in a totally different context.

In reality, it is an isolated landscape adjacent to Brockway Summit with no development touching its property lines. This is a clear indication of how poorly this project is being presented to the public and our decision-makers.

The project applicant kept their presentation to a generalized level, choosing to focus on the merits of the Martis Valley Opportunity Agreement, rather than on the project specifics and necessary mitigation for the environmental impacts the 760 unit residential development would create.

The MVOA outlined a process by which two conservation groups, Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation, would work with the business groups, Mountainside Partners and Sierra Pacific Industries, to negotiate a transfer of land use designations and preserve the last large landscape in the Martis Valley.

The agreement specified that the land on the east side of Highway 267 would be preserved as open space, to be purchased by or donated to the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Trust for Public Land in exchange for the development of the west side.

What the agreement did not outline was a specific project, nor the proposed Brockway Campground. A key component of the MVOA was negotiation through the public process.

Unfortunately, this is where the agreement fell apart. Despite attempts by MAP and other environmental groups to get clarity on the proposed MVW project, provide alternatives and suggest mitigation, the project proponent made minimal changes to the Specific Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Report.

The FEIR was released on May 3, 2016, and blatantly dismissed significant and unavoidable impacts to the Lake Tahoe and

Truckee region.

The NTRAC hearing requested the council provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the proposed project and final environmental impact report, only nine days after the release of the 2,000-plus page legal document.

This approach to land use planning is an affront to a reasonable public process. We are in the midst of reviewing the FEIR for Squaw Valley, and the public and decision-makers are forced to review another project of epic scale on what appears to be a fast tracked schedule.

In a room full of people, there was not one voice, other than the project applicant, in support of the MVWP project. There was great concern and opposition raised by MAP, Sierra Watch, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Friends of the West Shore, Sierra Club, members of the public and, most important, the community advisors for North Lake Tahoe.

NTRAC members asked critical questions and voiced numerous concerns regarding traffic, visual impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, workforce housing, night sky protection, project access from Highway 267, cumulative impacts from the adjacent Brockway Campground proposal and the limited amount of time to review the FEIR.

NTRAC members struggled with how to move forward, and finally voted to request the Planning Commission postpone their action on this item for 30 days to allow ample review of the FEIR, and that the Planning Commission be aware that there are serious concerns with the project, whether development is on the east or west side.

Based on my conversations with the county, this recommendation was ignored by Placer County; MVWP will be up for a vote on June 9 by the Planning Commission. This demonstrates a total failure by Placer County to honor the voice of the advisory council and dilutes the public process for a major land use

proposal in Martis Valley.

What is the purpose of these advisory councils if their recommendations are not upheld? Furthermore, why is Placer County allowing for more public review time on the Squaw Valley Village proposal and FEIR released in April, which will go to the Planning Commission on June 23?

There are far too many questions floating around as to the purpose of expediting the MVWP project with many unresolved impacts to the region.

Attend the Placer County Planning Commission hearing on June 9 at Granlibakken and make your voice heard. We support the preservation of the east side; however we cannot support the current proposal for the west side or the Brockway Campground.

*Alexis Ollar is executive director of Mountain Area Preservation.*

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## **Opinion: Climate change poses risk to Nev. economy**

**By Andy Wirth**

As the leader of a major destination mountain resort in North America, thankfully located in the Reno/Tahoe area, I am deeply concerned about the risk that climate change poses to our industry, and our entire region's economy. Climate change has already begun to reveal itself as persistent drought in the Sierra Nevada, lower snowpack, increased number and scale of forest fires, and the substantially increased volatility of

weather patterns across our great state.



Andy Wirth

None of this will help our local outdoor recreation economy and our region's overall economy.

Meanwhile, the Reno/Tahoe area is still working to recover from a recession that hit our community hard, in many ways much harder than the recent drought. Widespread economic downturns like the one we began to experience in 2008 impact tourist areas dramatically, since travel and recreation are often the first things cut from family budgets.

These two issues – climate change and a recovering economy – might not seem related, but there is a very real nexus between the two.

Only by addressing those aspects of climate change that are already impacting our region can we ensure long-term economic growth and a sustainable economy. Fortunately, we are incredibly well positioned to do so in Nevada.

Nevada has such great clean energy potential that we can not only meet our own energy needs easily with solar and geothermal, but we also have the very real potential to export renewable energy to states like California. We can lead the nation on clean energy and build a stronger and more diverse local economy at the same time.

Unfortunately, our region finds itself on a different path.



NV Energy, our state's largest utility, sends billions of dollars a year out of Nevada by importing coal and natural gas from other states. Earlier this month, NV Energy protected jobs for people in Arizona by announcing the purchase of another out-of-state natural gas plant. This is decidedly disappointing to all of us in Nevada and the region, as there is a very real, plausible and fiscally responsible alternative: investing in Nevada's renewable energy. These actions would create jobs here for you and your neighbors.

So what's standing in the way of Nevada's transition to clean energy? Many Reno residents probably don't realize that over one-quarter of their electricity comes directly from a dirty, expensive, outdated coal plant – North Valmy. This coal plant, far away near Battle Mountain, is quite literally NV Energy's dirty little secret. Valmy generates more climate-disrupting carbon pollution than any other single source in Nevada.

Currently Valmy is scheduled to continue operating until 2025, importing coal from Wyoming, spewing air pollution and accelerating the climate change that's devastating our industry and our future. It's time to end coal burning at Valmy and replace it with clean, affordable renewable energy. We must continue the forward progress we've made by bringing clean tech businesses like Tesla, Switch, Apple, Patagonia and Faraday to the region. We can't attract and retain these types of businesses if we are unable to supply them with the clean energy that is key to their business models.

Luckily, we have an opportunity before us right now to do just that. Gov. Brian Sandoval's Clean Energy Industry Task Force is considering recommendations this month on legislation to accelerate our transition to clean energy. The most important recommendation they could make would be to end coal burning at Valmy by 2020. I hope the Task Force will take a hard look at Valmy (and the out-of-state coal that powers it) as an opportunity to keep our energy dollars here at home.

Let's transition away from polluting coal energy and build in its place the 100 percent clean energy that is our region's indisputable future.

Sincerely,

**Andy Wirth, chairman Reno Tahoe Airport Board of Trustees  
Chairman, Regional Air Service Corporation  
President and CEO Squaw Valley Ski Holdings**