

Opinion: Isolationist stances on the campaign trail

By Andrés Martínez

Is America great *now*?

The answer in the presidential campaign is a resounding “Hell no!” And, surprisingly, there seems to be bipartisan consensus on this misguided assessment. (Spoiler alert: America still rocks.)

On the Republican side, the ostensibly self-financed frontrunner is raising money selling “Make America Great Again” caps. For Donald Trump, America’s former greatness was traded away by “loser” politicians hoodwinked by those crafty Mexicans, Chinese, and Japanese, not to mention the terrorists and their politically correct apologists.

None of his fellow Republican competitors push back with Reaganesque optimism—they’re all eager to match Trump’s grim outlook and blame on Barack Obama. Sen. Marco Rubio accuses the president of destroying the military; Sen. Ted Cruz talks of the Constitution as if it were some banned relic from our suppressed past; and doctor Ben Carson compares the U.S. to a patient in critical condition. The Republicans all talk about the nation’s moral fiber and social indices in apocalyptic terms.

On the Democratic side, the country is also going to hell, though in the Sanders-Clinton narrative the culprits are different: Wall Street banks, those heartless 1 percent folk and their enablers in the Republican Senate and the Supreme Court.

For Bernie Sanders, things are so bad we need a revolution. Then there’s Hillary Clinton the most intriguing

doomsayer in the race. If anyone should be the candidate pointing out the sky isn't falling, advocating for continuity for the Obama record, it's his former cabinet member.

Yet Clinton feels so much pressure to match the Trump-Sanders populist anger that she can't come up with a coherent narrative. So she defers to the consensus among her opponents that the rest of the world is a very scary place, posing far more threats than opportunities. Hence her disavowal of the landmark free trade agreement with Asia that she championed when she was in the administration.

Bill Clinton's embrace of free trade, welfare reform, and financial deregulation are so out of favor now with Democratic activists that the former first lady talks vaguely about her husband's success while distancing herself from all his administration's particulars. The last presidential candidate with such a conflicted relationship with Bill Clinton's legacy was Al Gore, who stubbornly refused to run a more positive campaign in 2000, coming across instead like an angry Democrat circa 2016.

How much does the candidates' fear mongering distort our picture of the world? I went through transcripts of the two Republican and the two Democratic debates leading up to the New Hampshire primary, and found that the most frequently mentioned foreign entity was not a formal country, but ISIS with 98 mentions by all candidates. Iran was mentioned 59 times; North Korea, 41; China, 27; Russia, 24; European Union, 15; Mexico, 7. And India, the second most populous country on Earth? Not once.

This is the campaign's world –a scary place dominated by ISIS, Iran, and North Korea, where Mexico and the EU are brought up when discussion turns to dodgy migrants. No candidate is talking optimistically about American leadership and the fact that our interests are aligned with the rise of the global middle class, a transformative trend of our time.

There is a deep irony in all this talk of American decline: The rest of the world now looks enviously upon the United States as a formidable winner. It's absurd for anyone to talk about China eating our lunch, given that country's stock market meltdown, and serious doubts over the communist leadership's economic management. Japan can't seem to emerge from its stagnation; the EU is mired in crisis. Oil-rich nations, including U.S. geopolitical adversaries, are crashing hard.

The rest of the world can only look on with envy at America's unemployment rate of 5 percent after 71 consecutive months of job growth. No country can come close to challenging our military strength. America can set the rules of the world's financial game, thanks to our control of the global reserve currency.

Donald Trump, who is obsessed with polls, should realize his narrative that we're losers doesn't square with financial poll numbers: The value of the U.S. dollar keeps surging as people around the world buy dollars and Treasury bills, and our cost of borrowing keeps falling.

Everyone is betting on America, except the people campaigning to lead her.

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.

Opinion: California out-of-bounds with taxes

By Ted Gaines

If you think Cam Newton, quarterback for the Carolina Panthers, suffered a crushing defeat on the football field during Super Bowl 50, then you haven't heard about the other beating he is about to take from the California tax man.

Newton's "loser's" share for the championship game is \$51,000. According to CPA and athlete-income specialist Sean Packard in *Forbes* magazine, the so-called "jock tax" rules in California, which factor in days worked in the state and annual income, would throw Newton for a loss – literally. Packard calculates that the athlete is set to pay a staggering 172.2 percent of his bonus in California taxes. That's right – Newton will pay \$87,800 in taxes on \$51,000 of income, a scenario that would make even Bernie Sanders shudder.



Ted Gaines

Ultra-wealthy professional athletes are not the most sympathetic characters in tax policy dramas. Even with our state picking his pocket, it's unlikely that Newton will be clipping coupons or flying coach on Southwest any time soon. But California's oppressive tax regime punishes every income strata. Want regressive taxes that hurt the poor? Our sales tax is the highest in the nation. Our gas taxes are in the top five, with a total burden of nearly 70 cents a gallon, which

takes a big bite out small business, commuter, and rural driver pockets.

Want anti-competitive taxes that drive businesses to other states and put a drag on job creation? Our 8.89 percent corporate income tax is the highest in the west and it inspires businesses to move to the less expensive surrounding states and especially towards the low-tax, smartly-regulated Texas. It's part of the reason business relocation expert Joe Vranich estimates that 9,000 businesses have "disinvested" (moved operations or made major investments in other states) from California in the past seven years.

For working people struggling to make ends meet, our state taxes are hardly trivial. Between 2004-15, roughly 900,000 more people moved out of California than moved into California from other states. The majority of those people leaving are in the middle- and lower-income categories, driven from California by high costs and seeking opportunity in our more affordable surrounding states.

Remarkably, Sacramento politicians and special interest groups are pushing for new and extended taxes this year. That is the worst fiscal idea imaginable. California's stratospheric taxes already punish Californians and make them artificially poor. You don't have to be sacrificing nearly 200 percent of your Super Bowl bonus to see that the state is bent on shaking every last dollar out of taxpayer pockets, even to the point of absurdity. Time to cut taxes. Enough is enough.

Ted Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, Shasta, Sierra and Siskiyou counties.

Editorial: Americans still committed to giving

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If a citizenry's willingness to voluntarily give of its resources to charity is an indication of national character, the United States is doing well, indeed. Study after study shows Americans give generously. That was curtailed only slightly by the Great Recession, but it has surged once more as unemployment rates drop.

The latest such report, published by Blackbaud, looks at how nonprofit fundraising efforts did in 2015. The news is good.

Overall, charitable giving increased by 1.6 percent over the previous year. Faith-based giving was a big part of this, as other studies, most notably the recently released Almanac of American Philanthropy, have shown.

Read the whole story

Opinion: ST Chamber defines goals for 2016

By Dave Jinkens

President Duane Wallace and the board of directors of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce held an all-day strategic and legislative planning session on Feb. 6 at the Best Western Station House Inn.

The board of directors held an extensive discussion of goals it wished to set for the organization and the legislative issues and concerns that need to be addressed by governmental bodies at all levels if we are to have a strong and viable economy that benefits all who live and work in our community. The South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce supports vigorous economic growth in the city limits and South Shore, new private-sector investment, and the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the community.



David Jinkens

We look forward to a good year in 2016. The board's legislative strategy will be a guide for chamber action in 2016 and the goals are clear and transparent. The board encourages positive and collaborative partnering opportunities with other community-minded organizations and community members. We want to build a strong local economy; foster the creation of good-paying jobs; respect the rights of the existing business owners and operators and residents (i.e. homeowners and renters); foster and develop opportunities for community success; and help and support initiatives that create a bright future for all who live and work here. We want to grow the economy not the local tax burden. We want change that makes a positive difference for all those who live and work here, and we need the help and support of elected and appointed leaders and the community to do so.

The Legislative Strategy

- **Airport:** Support efforts that recognize the Lake Tahoe

Airport as a vital regional and local transportation resource. It is a connector between the Tahoe basin and the U.S. Transportation System. It is an economic engine for the South Shore and non-aviation lands at the airport should be made available for economic growth opportunities to help our local economy, promote job growth and diversification and broaden the city's tax base.

- Recognize as well that the airport provides very high safety and emergency value to our community in a crisis situation.

- Support the idea of the return of commercial air service to South Lake Tahoe without burdening local taxpayers or businesses.

- **Arts Committee:** Form and organize an arts committee and develop an arts plan. Seek City Council support for plan implementation.

- **Building and Permitting:** Urge the adoption of regulations, policies, and fee structures that encourage and make it easier and less expensive for people to remodel and repair their homes and businesses. Streamline and expedite the processing of building permits and plan checks.

- **Business Friendly Rules:** Encourage and support timely city government initiatives and processes that update and streamline city codes and policies to promote the success and expansion of existing businesses citywide and protect existing city businesses. Ask that city and county governments weigh new rules and regulations against their impact on the success of the existing business community.

- **Caltrans Road Repairs/Closures:** Encourage and support continued work by Caltrans to repair and improve highways serving the Lake Tahoe Basin and the South Shore. Ensure that any proposed highway closures needed provide adequate alternate routes to minimize negative impacts on the business

community.

- **Campaign Contributions to City Elections/Full Disclosure:** Urge adoption by city government or by the public of full and complete campaign disclosure information and donation from all sources to candidates for City Council whether made by individuals, political action committees or businesses in state or out-of-state in order to create an open and transparent municipal election process.
- **Charitable Raffle:** Support changes in state law to allow a 50/50 formula for the operation of charitable raffles to encourage local charitable giving as was provided to professional sports teams in 2015 (i.e. by SB549).
- **Collaborate with Other Organizations:** Endeavor and work toward ways to support and cooperate with other business and charitable organizations that are working for the betterment of the entire community and in ways consistent with adopted South Tahoe Chamber goals and strategies.
- **Cross Lake Ferry:** Support in "concept" the Tahoe Transportation District to develop a cross-lake year-round ferry system between the North and South shores. The ferry would be an alternative to the vehicle to move people around the lake throughout the entire year. Examine the option of creating an auto-carrying ferry. Support funding from federal and state sources for capital costs and operations with no burden to the local taxpayer.
- **Economic Development Corporation:** Evaluate the feasibility of forming a local economic development and/or community development corporation to assist local businesses and grow the local economy and promote the creation of quality and attractive workforce housing using state and federal grant seed money and private-sector donations.
- **Fees, Charges and Taxes:** Oppose increases in fees, charges, and taxes by any governmental agency during these

times that are found to be detrimental to business owners and operators and the general public. Grow the tax base instead of the tax burden. Advocate for policymakers to have prepared an unbiased economic impact statement be made before new fees, taxes, and charges are proposed. Ensure that fees assessed by local governments do not exceed the cost to provide the service.

- **Housing:** Support initiatives to encourage the availability of safe, sanitary, and quality workforce housing in the City limits without burdening local taxpayers and identify federal and state resources to preserve and upgrade existing housing. Urge all permitting agencies to come together around the goal of significantly streamlining the process for affordable rental housing including finding ways to turn older motels into nice conversions of two-bedroom units.

- **Lighting:** Support in "concept" the installation of city street lighting in the Y area to promote the safe passage of pedestrians, encourage walking and biking, and promoting local businesses;

- **Loop Road:** Advocate for and insist on a complete and unbiased disclosure of all environmental, housing, resident and economic impacts of the proposed loop road project on the city of South Lake Tahoe before decisions are made to give project approval. Determine if the proposed project is consistent with the city General Plan and adopted Housing Element. Provide specific and complete written answers to questions posed on behalf of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the community in regard to project impacts.

- **Meyers Area Plan:** Advocate for a complete, scientifically sound, transparent, and unbiased survey of all Meyers residents and parties before adoption of a Meyers Area Plan by local and regional governments.

- **South Y Community Plan:** Support efforts to identify reasonably and responsible and economically sound ways to implement improvements to the Y area in a business-friendly manner. Don't let the new Y plan sit on a shelf.

We look forward to working with all community-minded organizations to make South Lake Tahoe and the South Shore the best that it can be for all those who live and work here.

Dave Jinkens is the Government Affairs co-chair for the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce.

Opinion: Potty-mouths have long history in politics

By Forrest Whitman, High Country News

A pre-school teacher buddy of mine thinks Donald Trump ought to be scolded for being such a potty-mouth. She thinks no politician in history has uttered such deliberately shocking phrases. This was after Trump said that Hillary "is a loser and should be schlonged."

She might be right about Trump, but politicians making shocking statements uttered are nothing new in the West. Some candidates have even been elected anyway – think Davis Waite, a member of the Populist Party who served as Colorado governor from 1893-95.

Waite was given to saying things like: "It is better, infinitely better, that blood should flow up to the horses' bridles than that our national liberties should be destroyed." That got attention 123 years ago. When candidates throw off

outrageous statements like that, the press often goes “tut-tut,” but that never seems to stop the shock talk. The Denver press teased Waite unmercifully for his wild statements and he was inevitably nicknamed “old bloody bridles.” Yet he won the governorship, though he lost it badly just two years later.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Students need more screen time

By Joe Mathews

California teachers, you should be showing your students more movies.

And not for babysitting purposes. As our state considers new frameworks for how history and social science are taught, now is the time to incorporate that signature California art–film–into classes at every grade level. Movies should be placed at the center of our efforts to teach history—especially the history of California.



Joe Mathews

Have a problem with that? I could quote a former mayor of Carmel and suggest you “Go ahead, make my day.” Or I could

utter a single word: Rosebud.

You'd be surprised how many people have no idea where those references come from. As someone whose life revolves around dealing with young Californians—as father, coach, and journalistic colleague of several millennials with fancy college degrees—I'm struck by how little they know of films, and thus of California's history. The film critic and historian Neal Gabler has warned that movies that once united the generations now divide us, “leaving us with an endless stream of the very latest with no regard for what came before. Old movies are now like dinosaurs, and like dinosaurs, they are threatened with extinction.”

This is not a trivial matter; it is the loss of the essence of our state's history. Our greatest films are California monuments. To be ignorant of them is akin to being Chinese without knowing of Confucius , or to being German without having read Goethe.

So let the education begin now. “Rosebud” is the signature word of the 1941 film “Citizen Kane”, ranked No. 1 on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest films of all time. Citizen Kane is a fictionalization of the life of a towering figure of American and California history: the newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. His story remains relevant today, in a state of new media titans with outsized appetites. And his mansion, the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, is a landmark every Californian should visit.

But when you look through the state standards for class content— what all California children are supposed to learn—you won't find one word about Hearst or “Citizen Kane”. Indeed, in the 68 pages of standards for history and social science classes, there are only brief mentions of the entertainment industry.

The good news: California is drafting a new history

framework—long outlines of what California student should be taught in each grade and subject. The bad news: the current draft on California history says nothing about film, movies, or Hollywood.

To this inexcusable omission of film from California history, my reaction is the memorable line from “Network”: “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!” (This line has been a staple of California political discourse, from Proposition 13 through the 2003 recall of Gov. Gray Davis.) California content guidelines must include films that shaped America’s very conception of itself, from “Casablanca” to “The Searchers”. (They also should require California history in high school, not just elementary school, so more mature themes can be taught.)

No one should get a degree from a California high school without seeing the classics that are signatures of our state’s history. These should start with Alfred Hitchcock’s “Vertigo”—the essential film of Northern California —and “Chinatown”—which still explains, better than any other document, Southern California’s dark view of itself. Other California movies that should be in the cannon include “Sunset Boulevard”, “The Graduate”, “Some Like It Hot” (shot at the Hotel Del Coronado), “The Grapes of Wrath”, “The Maltese Falcon”, “Annie Hall” (to understand why New Yorkers are so dismissive of us), and “Blade Runner”. I’d also add, for cultural relevance, “El Norte”, “Stand and Deliver”, “Pulp Fiction”, and “The Joy Luck Club”.

Incorporating film into class is not a new idea. My own quick search found electives in film—taught in both art and history departments—in dozens of California high schools. Films illuminate historian Kevin Starr’s juxtaposition of “the California of fact and the California of imagination.” For example, you could teach California’s water history by comparing the fictions of “Chinatown” with historical accounts.

Of course, basing California history in films will require overcoming the prejudice that movies are entertainment, not educational tools. I'd point out that, if you look for places showing classic films, you'll find yourself near our finest institutions of higher education. I was glad to see "Laura", the 1944 film noir, and "The Philadelphia Story", the 1940 romantic comedy, playing at the Stanford on University Avenue in Palo Alto last weekend.

Let's also keep in mind the words of Audrey Hepburn: "Everything I learned I learned from the movies." And if you've never heard of her, get yourself to the next classic movie night at the Vine Cinema in Livermore. They'll be showing "Breakfast at Tiffany's".

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

Letter: Friend honored at Bread & Broth

To the community,

A group of family members and friends of Agi Gaura hosted a Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment in her memory on Feb. 15.

Gaura, a longtime resident of South Lake Tahoe, passed away several months ago and her former co-workers from Harrah's-Harveys casinos wanted to honor her memory by helping feed those who struggle with hunger.

"We all came here today to honor our dear friend Agi Gaura who

had the kindness heart and would have loved to be here with us," commented Patricia Frega. "We love and miss her but our memories will prevail."

An Adopt A Day in February was chosen for Agi's memorial dinner because Valentine's Day was one of her favorite days to celebrate.

Over 20 friends and family members donated to Gaura's AAD Memorial dinner and in addition to Frega, Stephanie Bartholomew, Ann Marie Rose, Roxanne McKool and Pat Frega represented all of Gaura's friends by volunteering at the dinner. B&B is very grateful for this thoughtful and generous memorial gift which provided the funds to serve hungry, at risk people a hot, nutritious dinner at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

For more B&B information, go **online** or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Electronic devices and children

By John Rosemond, Tribune News Service

A 4-year-old boy informed his preschool teacher – a friend of mine – that he'd broken his iPad.

"Oh!" my friend said. "What a shame. Did you drop it?"

"No," the boy said, very matter-of-factly. "I got mad that my mom wanted me to share it with my sister, so I slammed it on the table and it broke."

His next sentence: “Now we have two of them so I don’t have to share.”

When the teacher conveyed this to me (as an example of the devolution of parenting since she began teaching), the first thing that came to mind was a gift I received in the mid-1980s from a complete stranger. I had written a column in which I speculated that video games were addictive and shortened a child’s attention span. A few weeks later, UPS delivered a state-of-the-art Nintendo accompanied by a lengthy letter from the president of Nintendo Corporation. It took him nine pages to tell me that I was dead wrong, that video games stimulated all manner of intellectual and social skills. They are, he said, a veritable fount of marvelous benefit.

Read the whole story

Opinion: EDC legal counsel giving bad advice

By Larry Weitzman

I have read hundreds of legal arguments in my life, maybe thousands, but on Feb. 5 I read one of the most specious and poorly supported “legal arguments ever” and it was from our newly appointed interim County Counsel Michael Ciccozzi. It was as if he were arguing before the Supreme Court of the United States and he cited a small claims court decision from Ryegate, Mont., as the legal authority behind his case. In this case, Ciccozzi was attempting to defend the employment contract of our interim CAO Larry T. Combs that appears to

have violated important Government Code sections.



Larry Weitzman

Combs' contract problem stems from executing an employment contract that didn't meet the requirements of CalPERS as explained in my **recent column**. CalPERS has strict requirements to prevent double dipping of a CalPERS annuitant, such as Combs. It was public pressure from citizens who were outraged at public officials making \$200,000 a year in retirement benefits, like Combs, and then getting another similar job effectively doubling their income. Poor Mr. Combs because of the double dipping laws is only pulling down \$300K annually. Those requirements are spelled out in Government Code Sections 21221 (h) and 21224. Two of those requirements are that an open recruitment for CAO is required before signing such a contract and that the contract have an end date.

Printed below the fold on the front page of the *Mountain Democrat* on Feb. 5 and titled "CAO contract details questioned" the news story quoted Ciccozzi who cited "a more recent CalPERS publication (April 2015) titled 'Employment After Retirement.'" Ciccozzi wrote that the more recent document "does not require that the employment requirements of a retired annuitant include a specified end date or that the appointment be during an open recruitment."

First, I have rarely seen a more misleading statement by a lawyer with the intent to deceive the public. While he found a CalPERS 10 page, double spaced pamphlet which listed some of the requirements for employment of retired annuitants, it

didn't list them all. But it did list all CalPERS offices and phone numbers, allowing easy access for questions. It was not a legal document nor intended to be a legal document, and it, therefore, has no legal force. It did not supersede or replace Government Code Section 21221(h), which still has the requirements of an open recruitment being required before Combs' hiring as well as an end date in the contract. The claim that Ciccozzi implies, by the informational pamphlet, since it is later in time than the CalPERS advisory circular or the code sections, that the law has been superseded by the pamphlet and code section requirement of having an open recruitment and no end date in the contract is no longer required. Nothing could be further from the truth, GCS 21221(h) et seq. is still the law.

For Ciccozzi, that becomes a multiple edged sword. Any real defense claiming there was an open recruitment ongoing at the time the contract was executed and having an end date is now out the window as Ciccozzi says the law didn't require that according to his "pamphlet law" and Ciccozzi knows that. His statement becomes a tacit admission that the county did not have an open recruitment or end date as required by Government Code Section 21221(h), the law as codified before and after the date of the Combs' contract and as set forth in the current California Code. Combs' contract speaks for itself as to having an end date. It doesn't have one.

Trying to cover all his bases in the *Mountain Democrat* story, Ciccozzi said, "The contract will terminate when Combs reaches 960 hours in the fiscal year." But if Combs works 959 hours in every fiscal year, it will never terminate so the contract is not of limited duration and still violates the code section. Code section 21221(h) still requires both contract requirements that Ciccozzi says don't exist anymore even though he speaks with a forked tongue.

Ciccozzi's cited pamphlet is not the law, was not published as a legal document and advised readers to call or check with the

nearly dozen CalPERS offices throughout the state whose addresses are listed in the back of the pamphlet along with the CalPERS phone number listed prominently on every other page of the pamphlet and Ciccozzi must be aware of that.

Additionally, even after claiming an open recruitment is not required by his "pamphlet authority," Ciccozzi states pursuant to the code section the interim appointment is to be made "during recruitment for a permanent appointment" and not necessarily during an open recruitment. Perhaps Ciccozzi should read EDC personnel rules, which say without question, "All recruitment announcements will be posted on the county's website and other appropriate locations for a minimum of five days." There was no posting on the county website or anywhere else for a permanent CAO on or before this contract was executed. His statements and/or emails as published in the *Mountain Democrat* are misleading and false. Ciccozzi's only defense will be "it depends on what the definition of 'is' is."

Ciccozzi now has acquired other problems and the Board of Supervisors needs to take notice. As a lawyer you swear an oath to uphold the law of the state. For whatever reason Ciccozzi chose to misstate the law, the purpose of which is obvious, i.e., to make it appear Combs' contract is CalPERS compliant. But by doing so he also fails his employer, the EDC Board of Supervisors who need to know the law and their exposure.

With his statements in the *Mountain Democrat* the BOS has been misled about the law from their own highest ranking lawyer. That is unacceptable behavior and the BOS needs to deal with that immediately. Maybe Ciccozzi thinks that is what the BOS wants to hear or maybe he is attempting to cover for his ex-boss Robyn Drivon, who should have not approved the Combs' contract considering the requirements of the law. It's hard to say why Ciccozzi did what he did, but as to whatever he says in the future, will it be believable?

But whatever he says, he may have already violated his State Bar duty, part of which is “to support the Constitution and the laws of the United States and of this state.” Perhaps we will find out. This not the first time for Ciccozzi misstating the law. This just appears to be a persistent pattern of practice.

“Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.”
– Samuel Johnson, (1709-1784) *Rasselas*, ch. 41

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: It pays to invest in the environment

By Joanne Marchetta

At Lake Tahoe, we know our natural resources are one of our most valuable assets, and that’s why we have worked for decades to conserve and restore them. The natural wonders of the Jewel of the Sierra and the opportunities they afford are why we live here, and why millions of visitors travel here to enjoy the Tahoe basin each year.

People around the world are coming to a similar realization about the Earth’s natural resources. They are working to understand the true economic value of nature and the resources and services it provides, and to better incorporate those values into policy decisions for a more sustainable future.



Joann
Marchetta

This is a shift away from the historic mismanagement of natural resources for short-term gain, but otherwise long-term detriment. This happened at Tahoe during the Comstock era and the building boom in the run up to the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley. People are instead today taking the longer view of nature as a form of wealth, and realizing our health and prosperity will depend upon conservation and the wise management of resources.

A recent *Washington Post* article called out a new study from the National Academy of Sciences publishing a formula for computing the price of nature. This idea of “natural capital” espoused by the Nature Conservancy and many other groups means recognizing and valuing the many ways that we all benefit from healthy, functioning landscapes and ecosystems, and pricing those values into decisions about their use, management, conservation, and restoration.

Even without the economists’ latest formula, we know it makes sense to invest in the health of Tahoe’s environment. People who support the Lake Tahoe region have long recognized and treasured the value of Tahoe’s natural splendor, and are working cooperatively to conserve it and restore it as our greatest capital asset. Tahoe’s natural wealth is immense and awe inspiring. Our mountain lake is one of the deepest and clearest lakes in the world, holding 39 trillion gallons of incredibly pure fresh water. We have majestic mountains world-renowned for skiing, hiking, and mountain biking, expansive forests, streams, marshes, and wildlife. Tahoe’s natural

splendor makes it a national treasure, a special place on Earth. It's the "natural capital" that drives the economic activity our communities depend upon.

Environmental restoration and recreational enhancements are the focus of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program. It's one of the most ambitious restoration programs in the nation, and is a model for collaboration and environmental investment because of its success. Since its launch in 1997, local, state, and federal governments and private sector partners have invested \$1.8 billion into projects to improve water quality and forest health, restore environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat, fight invasive species, and improve recreation opportunities.

Broad recognition that nature is Tahoe's greatest capital asset is also why we're seeing bipartisan support for the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015. Versions of the bill have cleared committees in both chambers of Congress, and we are optimistic our legislators will compromise to enact this important piece of legislation. It would authorize up to \$415 million in federal funding over 10 years for important environmental restoration and conservation work to continue at Tahoe, and to leverage these values with continued local, state, and private sector investment.

Environmental conservation and restoration are front and center in our Regional Plan. The plan is working to remove outdated legacy development from environmentally-sensitive areas, and to restore those areas so they filter polluted stormwater runoff while at the same time revitalizing our town centers.

The health of Tahoe's environment is also the primary focus of our strategic initiatives at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The work of our partner agencies to remove hazardous fuels from our forests will improve forest health and reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildfire. Ramping up our control

program to fight invasive species will keep them from doing more harm to our lake. Reducing stormwater pollution will improve water quality and restore lake clarity. And re-examining and updating our threshold standards, development commodities system, and permitting programs will facilitate the kind of redevelopment our environment and communities need.

At Lake Tahoe, there is no doubt that nature is an irreplaceable capital asset. The health of our environment and our economy are directly linked. Please join us in continuing to invest in the conservation and restoration of Tahoe's environment. We know it's the right thing to do, for those of us who enjoy Tahoe's splendor today and for future generations.

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