

# Editorial: Common-sense moves on California wildfires

**Publisher's note:** *The editorial is from the March 29, 2018, Sacramento Bee.*

After one of the deadliest and most destructive wildfire seasons in California history, it would add travesty upon tragedy if officials don't take significant steps to prepare for the next fire season.

Thankfully, it appears that lawmakers and officials are learning some of the right lessons, even as families and communities continue trying to recover and rebuild.

Congress finally fixed a major flaw in federal funding that took money away from crucial wildfire prevention programs. The sweeping budget deal that President Donald Trump signed last week sets aside \$2 billion a year for battling wildfires, treating them more like the natural disasters they are, just like hurricanes.

**Read the whole story**

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## Opinion: How to stay honest this tax season

**By Christian B. Miller, The Conversation**

As Americans begrudgingly work through their taxes this year, many could be facing a moral struggle about whether to be honest or not. They might be thinking about exaggerating that

donation to Goodwill, or not reporting that side job, among other things.

It is true that each year many people do cheat on their taxes. According to findings released by the IRS in 2016, tax evasion costs the federal government more than \$450 billion each year.

As a philosopher whose research focuses on character and ethics, I can say that there isn't much controversy that cheating, in most situations, is morally wrong – and that includes cheating on one's taxes.

So, how can we stay honest this tax season?

**We want to consider ourselves honest people**

First let's dive into the recent psychological research on cheating.

Researcher Lisa Shu and her colleagues published a study in 2011 in which participants were given a test with 20 problems for which they would be paid 50 cents per correct answer. Their answers were checked by a person in charge, and they were paid accordingly.

This part of the experiment was pretty straightforward.

But then they changed the setup a bit. The participants were told that they would be the ones grading their answers with no one checking on them. The incentive and the test remained the same. They were also told that their paperwork would be shredded and they could report their own "scores."

Here's the difference it made in what people ended up doing: In the first setup where there was no opportunity to cheat, participants averaged about eight correct answers. In the second setup where there was ample opportunity to cheat, the number of "correct" answers jumped all the way to 13.22.

This finding and other published results like them, provide an

important lesson about the psychology of cheating: When people think they can get away with cheating, and they also think it would be worthwhile to cheat, they are often motivated to do so.

But that is not all the research has to offer. Using the same basic framework as Shu's study, other research has added some interesting variations. For instance, participants in another study were first asked to recall as many of the Ten Commandments as they could before they took the test. In another variation, the participants were college students who first had to sign their school's honor code before they began.

Researchers found the average number of problems solved was essentially the same as when participants had no opportunity to cheat and their answers were graded by someone else.

Psychologists have provided an explanation for what is happening here. While people often want to cheat in certain cases if it would benefit them, they also want to think of themselves as honest. What the honor code and the Ten Commandments did in the experiments was to serve as moral reminders of the importance of being honest.

Other studies of cheating have found that even more subtle reminders can be effective. In one such study, cheating continued even when the instructions said, "Please don't cheat. ... Even a small amount of cheating would undermine the study." However, when researchers changed the wording for a second group, people did not cheat. This group was told: "Please don't be a cheater. ... Even a small number of cheaters would undermine the study."

The switch to "cheater" called to mind how the participants wanted to think of themselves as honest. Most fascinating of all, psychologists stopped study participants from cheating simply by having them sit in front of a mirror.

When given a moral reminder, it is hard for most people to

cheat.

## **What can you do to stay honest**

Coming back to the tax season, the question is how we can stay honest. Based on the research mentioned here, I want to suggest three practical steps:

- Use tangible moral reminders. They can be as simple as a Post-it note on your computer to be honest. One could also read a passage from a religious text or a different source of moral inspiration.
- If possible, do your taxes with someone else that you trust. With that accountability, it is a lot harder to give into temptation to cheat. We want to think of ourselves as honest, and we also want other people to think of us as honest too.
- Call upon role models. Try to imagine what your moral heroes in life would tell you to do if you are considering bending the truth to lessen your tax burden.

We shouldn't cheat on our taxes, not because we necessarily care about the IRS, but because we care about being people of honesty and integrity.

*Christian B. Miller is an A.C. Reid professor of philosophy at Wake Forest University.*

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# **Opinion: Dwindling Sierra snowpack here to stay**

**By Alex Hall Katharine and Davis Reich, Los Angeles Times**

Although recent storms have dumped heavy snow across the

Sierra Nevada, the April 2 snowpack measurement showed that it is still well below average. Last week, the Sierra-wide reading put the total snowpack at 15.8 inches of water content, or 43 percent below normal.

Here's an even more sobering reality. According to our new research, such spring snow measurements will be considered far above average in the decades to come.

We have just completed detailed projections of the Sierra Nevada's future climate. Our findings tell the story of a snowpack on life support. If greenhouse gas emissions continue unchecked, by the end of this century, the Sierra snowpack in a typical April will be 64 percent smaller than it was at the end of the 20th century.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Letter: EDC should comply with immigration laws**

**To the community,**

On April 3, many from the El Dorado County Republican Central Committee, State of Jefferson and other county citizens will be appearing before the EDC Board of Supervisors, requesting that they adopt a resolution declaring that El Dorado County will comply with federal immigration law and does not constitute a sanctuary jurisdiction.

Joining them will be a representative from Rep. Tom McClintock's office, who will be reading a letter from the congressman. This is also supported by Sheriff John

D'Agostini, who last year publicly vowed he would comply with federal immigration law and uphold the U.S. Constitution. As well, District Attorney Vern Pierson, who testified in opposition of SB54, before the state Assembly Judicial Committee.

Counties that have adopted resolutions include Tehama, Orange, Siskiyou, Shasta and Kern and the cities of Anderson, Lincoln, Colusa and Los Alamitos. The effort is spreading through the 23 counties of aka the State of Jefferson, to include Placer and Calaveras, who have also approached their county supervisors.

The El Dorado County Republican Central Committee has also reached out to other state elected officials.

The meeting is at 9am at the county supervisors chambers, 330 Fair Lane, in Placerville.

**Terry Gherardi, El Dorado County Republican Central Committee**

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## **Letter: Make voices heard regarding SnowGlobe**

**To the community,**

On April 3, the city of South Lake Tahoe will consider the permit requirements for the 2018 SnowGlobe event. As of this writing there are no contractual changes to sound levels which were arbitrarily created the second year of SnowGlobe.

Given the existing sound restrictions have not been violated beyond short-term peaks above 95 dB and a laughable requirement for sound to be at sustained levels for a time

frame that is longer than any song played (10 minute sound restrictions for 6-minute songs), SnowGlobe would be within their rights to turn the sound up and not see so much as a fine or be asked to turn it down.

To be fair, SnowGlobe is changing the event and will attempt to mitigate sound. Like a speeding car who has seen the waiting police car, they have applied the brakes to are trying to prevent from being held accountable for their violations. They are making token changes to try and appease the complaining masses and are doing so of their own volition. The city, in the roll of the waiting police, continues to be asleep at the wheel. They neither register the violation of their own rules nor attempt to enforce them. They have handed off the need to take action to others who haven't the authority to do anything. We can only hope they wake up in time to do what is required.

The No Globe Alliance has tried to be fair. We have asked for modest changes and asked for measurable enforceable regulations that would allow this event to continue and provide a means to relieve the impact on local residents. We have reminded the city of its obligation to follow and enforce existing regulations with the TRPA, El Dorado County and the city itself. To date we have received no acknowledgement from anyone at the city that the Bijou/Al Tahoe Community Plan even exists, that El Dorado County has noise limits or that the MOU with the TRPA requires the city to both measure and enforce these ordinances.

Like a child who does not want to hear that they have homework to do, the city continues to pretend none of this exists and wants to keep playing. It is well past time for the voting public to recognize these childish actions and elect to play the parent, elect to enforce the rules and elect different City Council members.

We will be speaking on Tuesday about this event. We ask that

anyone interested to join us to support measurable, enforceable change that is defined in the contracts and not just asked as a favor. No city can function without written defines requirements that are measurable and enforceable. The time for half measures and looking the other way is over.

Sincerely,

**Scott Ramirez, South Lake Tahoe**

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# **Opinion: L.A.'s water pretensions**

**By Joe Mathews**

“Chinatown” is fooling itself.

Los Angeles has a long history of water deceptions, a point made famously by Roman Polanski’s 1974 film. But the massive self-sabotage of the city’s latest scheme is a real doozy. L.A. has convinced itself of the hokum that it has all the water it needs.



**Joe Mathews**

Let me be clear: L.A. must produce more of its own water for its long-term security. And leading Angelenos are right to



ramp up storm water capture, groundwater clean-up, recycling and conservation so that more L.A. water is local.

But the idea being sold by elites – that L.A. can become completely self-sufficient on water – is a fantasy. Producing more local water is so costly that L.A. would be fortunate to get half of its water from local sources.

Which makes L.A.'s current deluge of self-deception dangerous. Leading Angelenos are now broadcasting their self-sufficiency message at a moment when the state is debating a vital plan to shore up a crucial piece of the region's water supply: the California Delta.

That proposal, estimated to cost anywhere from \$10 billion to \$30 billion, would construct one or two tunnels to carry Sacramento River water south, thus providing more certainty about the 30 percent of L.A. water that runs through the Delta.

The project should be a no-brainer for L.A. But L.A. isn't thinking clearly when it comes to water. Instead, the city, under Mayor Eric Garcetti—a smooth-talking optimist full of plans and presidential ambition—has come to believe it can make transformational changes without much trouble.

Such triumphalism is rooted in the city's winning streak: securing the 2028 Olympic Games, rebuilding its schools, reviving South L.A., transforming downtown into a true center, and expanding transit.

But water is different. In a triumphalist L.A. Daily News op-ed, Garcetti framed his drive for water self-sufficiency as a "Mulholland moment," a strange choice given that William Mulholland ushered in water imports that Garcetti now rejects.

From there, the mayor went off the deep end, blasting the Delta tunnels as unnecessary, even detrimental to the dream of L.A. self-sufficiency, writing: "We will never be able to

solve our water needs if we have tunnel vision.” And then he wrote of a city that gets 70 percent-plus of its water from elsewhere: “I’m often asked if we have enough water in Los Angeles for our future. And I always answer that we have plenty of water.”

Garcetti isn’t alone in his hubris. The L.A. City Council just voted to oppose the tunnels if they don’t meet certain conditions. That vote reflects fears of local environmental and consumer groups like Food & Water Coalition and Consumer Watchdog that have used the myth of self-sufficiency to oppose the tunnels. They have campaigned for the firing of the L.A. Department of Water and Power’s ratepayer advocate, Fred Pickel, for the crime of saying that L.A. could afford the water that the Delta tunnels would bring.

Of course, interest groups and politicians aren’t the only Angelenos selling fantasies of self-sufficiency. UCLA has issued a Grand Challenge that includes many smart ideas for creating more local water, but also promotes the self-sufficiency myth, setting out the goal of transitioning L.A. County to “100 percent local water” by 2050. The challenge’s leader, the brilliant and usually sober-minded environmentalist Mark Gold, embraced the madness with a Los Angeles Times piece, titled “Let’s Go Local on Water,” and touting “complete water self-sufficiency.”

Gold, at least, acknowledged that such a transition would be extremely costly. Other Angelenos love to talk about the tunnels’ high sticker price and how it would get passed on to ratepayers and property taxpayers. But the truth is that Delta water via the tunnels would be far cheaper than all the expensive new infrastructure needed to make L.A.’s water more local.

And the tunnels are a real project. L.A.’s various sustainability water plans are vague on how a transformation to local water would be paid for. Such plans also ignore the

reality that L.A.'s water is becoming less local. The 2012-2016 drought increased L.A.'s reliance on water imports, particularly from the Delta and the Colorado River. The combination of that greater dependence on imports—and L.A.'s statements of self-sufficiency—is dangerous. Why should other parts of the state send water to us, if our leaders say we don't need it?

So, my fellow Californians, I hereby apologize for Angelenos' ingratitude for the water that comes from your communities to ours. I wish I could promise you that we Angelenos will cool the self-sufficiency rhetoric while the state debates the tunnels.

But c'mon, Jake, you know what town this is.

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

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## **Opinion: Calif. fishing industry drying up**

**By Brian Hines, Sacramento Bee**

When I was 10, I taught myself how to fish in California's redwood-lined Russian River, once a world-renowned wild steelhead rainbow trout sport fishery. Today, as a veteran trout and salmon sport angler I see how climate change threatens our wild trout and salmon populations and our outdoor traditions.

California is home to 31 kinds of salmon and trout. Of those, 23 are at risk of going extinct over the next century. Many

factors affect the health of California fisheries, including water diversions and pollution, forestry practices, mining, and dams. Climate change, which leads to extreme drought, reduced snowpack, increased wild fires, ocean acidification, and warmer stream waters, compounds the threat to our cold-water fisheries.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: It's too soon for #MeToo apathy**

**By Lyndsey Gilpin, High Country News**

Before the #MeToo movement took off on social media, before it was common knowledge that members of the Trump administration – including the president himself – had been accused of sexual misconduct, before male media moguls, Hollywood actors and executives, an Olympic coach, comedians, editors, professors, business leaders and others were ousted or called out for similar accusations, I spent a year investigating sexual harassment in the National Park Service. I talked to dozens of women about their experiences. Almost every one told me she feared things would never change – that if she spoke up, she'd risk her career, her reputation, her ambitions, all for nothing.

Each time, I promised I would do everything in my power as a journalist to hold the people and institutions that perpetuate this culture accountable.

That was over a year ago. Since then, the national discourse about sexual harassment has shifted. People are more confident

about sharing their stories, making the subject less taboo. The movement is spurring conversations about what harassment is and how power dynamics play out in the workplace. More revelations about my own focus – the widespread, systemic sexual harassment and gender discrimination in our nation's public-land agencies – have surfaced.

**Read the whole story**

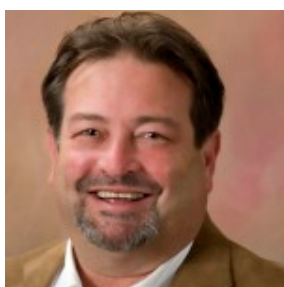
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## **Opinion: Loop Road issues need addressing**

**Publisher's note:** *This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and Lake Tahoe News.*

**City Council,**

The bypass loop road project preferred alternative will be out any day now. We all know what that decision will be. It is obviously awkward to have one of your members suing you regarding Measure T. While the judge did rule in their favor, that was done without the proponents even being able to be in the discussion to present an argument of any kind and your former attorney unfortunately did not defend the citizens but rather evidently rolled over. It seemed that ex parte may have actually occurred.



Duane Wallace

That was then. This is now. We believe the advice you were given was not appropriate. Your simply changing the language in consultation with your co defendants/ us might have worked. And it still may work. We are after all co-defendants not adversaries and your role is to defend your citizens not to side with unknown financiers of an expensive lawsuit against your citizens. That has seemed be lost in the mix.

The proponents have made it seem like birds are going to sing and the sun will shine brighter with pedestrians walking hand in hand if we will only allow this one mile, \$100 million freeway project to go through one of our neighborhoods. We see only dark clouds ahead. The fact still remains that 60 percent of your voters want a say in the decision regarding the project. It appears that percentage although very high has grown ever larger. The question is, how high does it have to be for the council to accept it as being valid? I have heard some council members say that oh well the voters don't really know what they want so the council needs to decide all issues. We elected people sure think the voters knew what they were doing when they elected us. I know I do when I'm elected. But that doesn't mean we should stop listening but rather quite the contrary. And it is in our state Constitution that the voters have the ability and right to make state, county and city decisions especially when it comes to taxes. (Judges are actually instructed to give great deference to the voters intent). It certainly needs to be explored whether the California side of the bypass will have to use tax funds to put up their share of the federal required match on the \$100 million. Where will that approximately \$5 million come from? The match is usually 20 percent which would actually mean our share is tens of million dollars. Unless it is a straight 100 percent grant, the feds always expect a 20 percent match. The Nevada side has already voted for a gas tax for their share. I asked the TTD representative, where will ours come from? He

didn't know. Do you know where our California side share will come from?

Another of the arguments against the initiative was that the city will not have a say in the matter so its unnecessary for the citizens to have to vote. I have attached the TTDs own words from their website (attached) regarding the City as a partner and the fact that you have a decision making say over the project. Please take the time to read that brief statement from their introduction of the project. Certainly changing zoning such as the housing element and densities will require Council votes as well as abandoning of right of ways dedicating city streets and accepting a U.S. Highway through that mostly Hispanic neighborhood. Since we brought up the website we haven't been able to find that page again. Does that make it less true or just more inconvenient? As we have said before, it is basically taking a traffic problem between the casinos and moving into one of your citizens neighborhoods. In addition the Hispanic Caucus of the California State Legislature has been approached. They may not see it as just a neighborhood especially since this could not happen in any other neighborhood in our City.

Scores of citizens have complained about the loss of all those almost 100 houses. So then the TTD started calling it another name, that being an affordable housing project. It turns out that there is not enough funding for that element from the federal dollars they seek. And there is very little or almost no interest from contractors who would rather build Chateau like projects or MCmansions that have profit connected to them. Unfortunately, affordable housing is not affordable for those seeking to build them. While the TTD proclaims possibilities not one single company or contractor has stepped up to commit because no subsidies exist. Simply buying out homes and renters with vouchers or moving the families with up to 100 school children into places in Nevada like the old middle school will not replace the lost housing. Neither will

buying homes on the California side and dedicating them. The loss of 100 will still be there. If the kids move into Nevada it will cost LTUSD about a half million dollars at about \$5,000 per pupil per year. Building a project in California might only replace what will be lost and detour us from finding actual additional housing that we so desperately need. In fact, even if the houses were replaced it would still only have us break even and not increase the number of homes we need. That is a zero sum game played out upon our poorest residents.

Another argument was that the B=ypass would relieve traffic congestion. However, the Chateau project has made that an impossible claim to support. Caltrans couldn't make the numbers work. So now yet another name. It is now called a revitalization project. However, given that Nevada has a convention center waiting at the end of the bypass and the fact that a shopping center is also planned that will also be waiting at the end of the Bypass is problematic. It now becomes a Douglas County revitalization project. For example, when visitors use their GPS as so many now do they will be directed to take pioneer trail to a bypass road that effectively will reduce a large amount of traffic that will most likely move the cars/customers on Highway 50 over to a long line at the junction with Pioneer trail. It won't reduce traffic jams but rather move them. One has only to drive through downtown Carson City to see the empty stores and businesses for sale to envision our fate. Or they can drive down Highway 99 past the towns that were bypassed. All have suffered the same result.

The business being threatened do no not see it as revitalization. We have gone in person to those merchants and restaurants. They tell us that they are scared and not in favor. The ones in the formerly Crescent V have indicated that they have been advised to stay out of the issue. They express concerns about what they have been told will be four years of



traffic detours and road reconfigurations. They fear that they will not survive what seems to always take longer. They see that some property owners may have been promised first selection for relocation in order to stop them from being vocal. They also don't understand how diverting traffic around behind them before the cars even reach them can mean revitalization for them. That is especially true since not one single parking spot will be created. That coupled with the casinos now charging for parking will create constantly circling traffic that will not be a safe biking and walking paradise as described. Where will the revitalization come from if all our parking is already full?

The rest of us see a compilation of road projects that could truly ruin South Lake Tahoe's reputation for many years to come. First, we have the ongoing U.S. Highway 50 project through town that will be still happening. Then we have the Echo Summit bridge replacement that will send traffic over Emigrant Trail adding another hour to the drive with no retail, gas or safety services including cell service for the entire trip. Then there is the roundabout in Meyers that will greet them when they come down Luther pass. Then the traffic will be total chaos at the Bypass project. All of these may be happening at once. Then there will still be the usual Sunday backup from Meyers all the way back through town except worse because of the roundabout construction and the Echo Summit bridge added to that queue of outgoing traffic. Then we can add the ski Run project that will divert that traffic back onto the main Highway. Even if we are wrong by one or two projects it will still be more delays during summer than we have ever had. And what will that do to the already poor bus system as riders have to wait in the same traffic in their attempt to get people to their destinations such as work on time. How will that congestion make for a good experience for any mode of transportation?

It is a result the foregoing concerns and for the returning of

a better relationship with 60 percent of your constituents that we ask you to allow the people who voted for you to also be given a vote on this Bypass project. Please direct your attorneys to find ways to support your citizens initiative against the outside Sacramento law firm and their mysteriously funded lawsuit that is keeping you from being in concert with the majority of your constituents.

Respectfully,

Duane Wallace

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## Opinion: Pointing out SLT's flawed processes



Members of the South Lake Tahoe recreational marijuana working group stand with David Orr as he addresses the City Council on March 27. Photo/Kathryn Reed

**Publisher's note: *The following was read to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on March 27 by David Orr, a member of the city's recreational marijuana working group.***

After South Lake Tahoe voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 64 in November 2016, the city of South Lake Tahoe began the process of considering local cannabis regulations in August of 2017. As part of that process, the City Council subcommittee opted to create our working group that has dedicated significant time and energy to helping determine the best cannabis regulations for our community. The working group met seven times over 12 weeks and spent a total of 24 hours discussing potential commercial cannabis policies for the city of South Lake Tahoe.

Members of the committee represented a full range of perspectives, from those who voted against Proposition 64 and were inclined to enact a local ban to those who wanted to see the proliferation of a robust cannabis industry in the city. The group recognized that state law permits recreational cannabis, and even those who would prefer a ban recognized the impact that state law would have on our community. With a ban, we would not be able to eradicate a black market and there would still be impacts on our youth, health system and medical services.

As such, the group consensus moved to developing smart policy that regulated local cannabis operations, while providing resources for enforcement, education, and prevention that would otherwise be unavailable to our community.

The group focused on developing a framework that allowed commercial activity in the city, that balances the desire to avoid a proliferation of businesses, but embraces a tightly regulated structure that allows smart local growth of the industry. This group is standing here together because we came to 100 percent consensus in our recommendations, and we stand by those recommendations.

Democracy is messy, which means that although we didn't always agree completely, we did agree that coming together and compromising on recommendations was the best path forward to achieve good, and democratic policy in our city. We also understood and recognized our recommendations would provide a framework for City Council and community discussion and not necessarily translate into the final policy adopted by council, similar to what happened in the VHR process.

However, what started out as a positive, constructive process has instead devolved into a process excluding our group and left us dismayed by a dismissive staff process. We understand that we all have biases, but the way staff has dismissed consideration, conversation and engagement as a result of those biases isn't just frustrating, it is damaging to the public's trust in the City Council's process.

We cannot emphasize enough the work that went into this process. Our recommendations were the culmination of significant, thoughtful analysis in consultation with lawyers, law enforcement, industry experts, healthcare providers, educators, parents and community leaders. Our preparation packets included robust data and credible studies on both sides of the issue from California and other states that have legalized adult use cannabis. We encourage you to review those packets, minutes and report, as they were prepared thoughtfully and with the goal of helping determine the best local policy for our community.

We twice presented the report that came from hours of deliberation to City Council, and neither time were we asked a single question about our detailed and comprehensive recommendations, even as part of the council workshop. A month and two additional council meetings later, council has yet to meaningfully discuss our recommendations or policy direction at all despite having tasked us – committed community members – with the important responsibility of crafting a framework for that discussion. Those recommendations have been covered

in the press and there has been no public outcry by pro-cannabis activists or anti-cannabis activists, demonstrating our recommendations are not controversial.

Additionally, we have concerns about how staff has set up [Tuesday's] meeting. For example, staff has provided numerous questions for council and included columns for council to essentially "vote" on each of these, presumably ahead of the meeting, which could be viewed as making decision outside of the public process, which would be illegal.

The current process set up by staff diverges from council direction and the process used in previous subcommittee structures. Without a consistent and transparent approach, fewer and fewer citizens will trust the City's process or be willing to engage in future subcommittees knowing that their time and effort could be tossed aside, as ours has been to date.

We urge the council to be consistent with the process it used in the VHR debate, where they convened a subcommittee, reviewed and considered their recommendations in the form of an ordinance and made changes to that policy. Staff's professional recommendations in VHR discussion were generally limited to their role in implementation, such as how to implement the VHR cap, etc.

An ordinance consistent with Proposition 64 has been drafted that follows our recommendations and would allow such a discussion. We appreciate your consideration and ask to be meaningfully included as you develop the next steps in your conversation on this important policy.

*Peggy Eichorn, Jane Flavin, Julie Garrett Wright, Liz Hallen, Kelsey Magoon, Rosemary Manning, Kevin McHugh, David Orr, Francisco Rodriguez, David Turner, Christina Wilson, Jude Wood (\* Devin Middlebrook is out of the country)*