

# Letter: Kirkwood lends a hand at B&B

To the community,

Since 1989, Bread & Broth has been serving free hot dinners to thousands of diners every year. Beginning in 2010, the Adopt A Day of Nourishment program was put into place to encourage individuals, churches, organizations and business to join B&B in providing these needed meals as a service to the community.

Thanks to the commitment of Vail Resorts and funding from its Epic Promise grant program, Kirkwood Mountain Resort hosts six Adopt A Day dinners annually. Sponsoring their first AAD of 2018, Kirkwood hosted the Jan. 23 Monday meal and sent Cara Bourne, Shayne Carlson and Reba Mourao from Kirkwood's ski school team to volunteer alongside the B&B volunteers to pitch in with the dinner service and bring their wonderful people skills to welcome and cheerfully serve the dinner guests.

After packing food giveaway bags and working the serving line, Mourao shared her feelings about the evening's experience. "It was an enjoyable experience being able to interact with our local community and the volunteers who regularly dedicate their time. It is heartwarming to see how much food and time is donated to make a filling dinner every Monday and to see the filled 'take home' bags."

B&B would like to thank Kirkwood for their \$300 donation to cover the meal's food, supplies and utility costs and encouraging their wonderful team members to give of their time and effort to help others in our community.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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# Opinion: Public discussions on sexual harassment changing

By Juliet Williams

Twenty years ago, major news outlets reported allegations that then-President Bill Clinton had a sexual relationship with a 22-year-old White House intern.

Looking back, the Clinton-Lewinsky affair heralded a sea change in political discourse by normalizing public discussion of sex acts. Today, it is hard to believe that esteemed presidents, from Thomas Jefferson to John F. Kennedy, were sheltered from public judgment by a code of decorum that conveniently regarded the subject of sex as beneath the dignity of political discussion. That all changed in the Clinton days when terms like “oral sex” and “semen stain” were catapulted from the domain of hushed whispers to front-page news.

Fast forward to today, and once again the man sitting in the oval office is dogged by allegations of sexual misconduct. As a scholar who has examined public reaction to political sex scandals since the Clinton days, this is hardly where I expected we’d find ourselves in 2018. Twenty years ago, it seemed plausible that difficult conversations spurred by revelation of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair – about issues ranging from sexual harassment to the nature of sexual consent – would lead to lasting changes in the way women and men conducted themselves in the workplace, and well beyond.

But how far have we really come?

**Sexual harassment remains prevalent**

The election to the presidency of a man who boasts of “pussy-grabbing” is an indication that we still have a long way to go.

Today, sexual harassment remains commonplace, despite legal protections and the introduction of anti-harassment training in many workplaces. Surveys report that between 25 percent to 85 percent of women say they have been sexually harassed at work. Even the most conservative of these findings indicate a widespread problem. For women in certain employment sectors – including male-dominated industries like construction or service jobs where workers rely on tips to earn a living wage – rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault are likely to be far higher.

The persistence of workplace sexual harassment is a powerful reminder that gender-based subordination pervades modern life. But that doesn’t mean nothing has changed since the Clinton era. Looking back, three differences between now and then deserve our attention.

### **Signs of progress**

First, no longer are the only men held to public account for sexual misconduct those who represent us in the most literal sense – elected officials. Today, prominent figures in entertainment, corporate America, sports and academia are facing public scrutiny for their actions. Already this has led to serious professional consequences for some and may even result in criminal prosecution for others.

Stars wore black at the 75th annual Golden Globe Awards in solidarity. Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

There is, however, a risk that the scope of the problem will be minimized by the media’s focus on high-profile perpetrators and the mostly privileged, mostly white women who have drawn attention as victims. The notion that men made powerful by

fame or wealth can abuse their power is easy to understand. But a person doesn't have to be rich or famous to have power over another. The fact is that anywhere there are gender relations, there are power relations.

Second, as more accusations come to light, we are witnessing a shift in the terms of sexual discourse. In the past, the media has fallen into a Victorian-era vernacular when reporting on sexual allegations involving prominent men. Think about it: When is the last time you heard a modern-day journalist use a term like "adultery" or "chambermaid" outside of covering a sex scandal?

Now, the media faces sharp criticism for using the noncommittal term "sexual misconduct" when discussing legally actionable crimes, including rape. The shift to more explicit language is important because it helps counter the idea that there is something inherently shameful about naming sexual abuse for what it is.

Finally, sex today is being discussed in terms that are not just personal, but political. In the Clinton era, women like Gennifer Flowers, Juanita Broaddrick, Kathleen Willey, Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky paid a steep price in terms of their own privacy when allegations of presidential sexual misconduct arose. At the time, it often seemed as if these women were the main story.

In contrast, today's scandalous revelations are quickly leading to conversations about questions of gender equality that implicate all of us. Meanwhile, social media campaigns like #MeToo are drawing attention to the failure of the traditional media to make space for victims to speak in their own voices and on their own terms.

Twenty years ago, millions around the world learned of a sexual affair between a president and a young intern. Two decades and countless sex scandals later, stories of sex and

power are still roiling the public. This time, however, they are also galvanizing a broad-based movement with concrete demands for change. It's been a long time coming, and I hope there is no turning back.

*Juliet Williams is a professor of gender studies at UCLA.*

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## **Opinion: Put teeth in Nevada's public records act**

**By Victor Joecks, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Nevada's public records law has a big bark, but little bite. It's time to change that.

The law states that public access to government records "foster(s) democratic principles." The records act "must be construed liberally to carry out this important purpose."

That's strong rhetoric, and rightly so. Government officials work for the public. That makes members of the public the boss. One of your rights as a supervisor is to know what your employees are doing.

Imagine if your employer came to your office to find out what you're working on, and you told him it was none of his business. Think you'd have a job for very long? Yet that's what government employees often do.

**Read the whole story**

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# Opinion: Oprah for Santa Barbara County supervisor

Dear Oprah,

You might become a fine president. But you and your state, California, would be better off if you ran for Santa Barbara County supervisor instead.

That's no joke. If you want to tackle our nation's greatest problems, there's no need to trudge through the D.C. swamps. You can stay right at home in your Montecito mansion.



Joe Mathews

A local government position in a small place 90 miles north of L.A. might sound like a comedown for a billionaire. It isn't. For all its wealth and natural beauty, your county of 445,000 is now the most challenged place in California. That was true even before two recent disasters—the massive Thomas Fire that forced you to evacuate, and the subsequent mudslides that killed 20 people— occasioned soul-searching about emergency response, infrastructure, and development in the county.

I realize that being a local politician was the furthest thing from your mind in 2001 when you bought a 42-acre spread there and named it The Promised Land, a nod to Martin Luther King Jr.'s final speech in 1968. No, you loved the idea of Santa Barbara as a magical quasi-island on the land—a place cut off from the world by the sea and the mountains, but still close

enough to take a lunch meeting in Hollywood.

But that geographic isolation makes Santa Barbara's problems more complex and costlier. Consider the area's chronic water troubles. Santa Barbara remains in drought even after last winter's rains. Why? The landscape that makes Santa Barbara so dramatically beautiful—high mountains next to the ocean—also makes it hard to capture water.

When rain lands, it rushes out to sea, too quickly to be captured by reservoirs or seep into the aquifer. Rising ocean water is seeping into the region's freshwater supply. Santa Barbara has responded by buying more water and installing a desalination plant. (This is why your laidback neighbor The Dude—Jeff Bridges—was reportedly angry when he learned you had dug a new well on your property.)

Santa Barbara also lacks strong infrastructure to connect it to the rest of the state (the 101 is a parking lot, the Amtrak train is slow, and the airport has been losing flights). And county government is hamstrung by persistent budget shortfalls. (It could use your Midas touch.)

This reflects the area's badly imbalanced economy. Santa Barbara, which mixes wealthy transplants and low-wage workers in agriculture and tourism, has the second worst income inequality in California after the Bay Area. And by advanced statistics—which account for Santa Barbara's high housing costs and its people's relatively low levels of income from government programs—it has the highest childhood poverty rate in California.

Santa Barbara poverty looks different than the poverty you grew up with in Milwaukee. But it's damaging nonetheless.

Drive up to Santa Maria, the county's most populous city. You'll see pretty parks and single-family homes. But when you knock on doors, you'll discover two and three families packed into many houses. You'll also hear plenty of concerns about

crime in neighborhoods with high murder rates. And you'll also find children who can seem cut off from their beautiful region.

So, while you're there, make some young friends and drive west on Main Street until you reach the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, a county park that sits right on the ocean. You'll find that many Santa Maria kids, haven't experienced the roaring waves or the 550-foot dunes, the tallest on the West Coast, even though they live 10 miles away.

That's the kind of thing you could do as a county supervisor that you couldn't do as president.

Yes, the White House offers awesome power. But you'd also find yourself constrained by partisan polarization. To take that job, you'd have to give up your media empire—unless you want to be criticized and investigated as ceaselessly as the self-enriching current president is.

As a county supervisor, you could keep your businesses while serving your community. You'd be less constrained in pursuing your agenda—county supervisors in California are both the legislative and executive branches, so supes who can collaborate with colleagues can make a ton of difference.

And then there's the power of your example. Americans spend far too much time obsessing over the madness of our crazy national politics, while ignoring the more fundamental and important work of local governance. You, by becoming a local supervisor, would inspire imitators all over the country.

You've been successful in life because of your ability to bridge the experiences and aspirations of the wealthy and the poor, the fortunate and the not so fortunate. Santa Barbara County needs more bridges like that. Is there any higher public service than to save the place you call home?

Your fellow Californian,



Joe Mathews

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

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## **Letter: More to the story on VHRs in SLT**

**Publisher's note: *This is in response to Joshua Priou's letter.***

Mr. Joshua Priou:

I have done my research and I am well aware of the regulations which I will cite point for point later in my reply. You mention the visit this past weekend, which we both agree met the letter of the regulations with the exception that 11 people self-reported having stayed at this home. How do I know? I spoke with both the bus driver and those leaving your property on Sunday. They reported having been a group from a Bay Area college dorm that had been delivered to multiple homes throughout South Lake Tahoe. Also, we agree that they were well behaved and generally one of the better groups.

What you neglect to include are previous visits that were not so wonderful. During past visits we have seen six to eight cars, boats in the street and 15 or more people arriving and disappearing into the house. We have seen maid visits last overnight and garbage left out for bears. None of which we have reported because we have tried to be good neighbors and respect the rights of the owners of the house. During the past New Year holiday we saw greater than 15 college kids arrive in eight cars. They arrived ahead of their chaperone and relieved

themselves in the woods adjacent to the house. We warned your guests in person to follow the guidelines posted or they would be fined. We called the owner who I believe contacted you to ensure they were meeting the requirements cited and posted in their agreement. We did our best to ensure your business was not subjected to fines and adversely affected due to the actions of your guests. Rest assured, I will no longer fail to report violations.

Your description of the ideal vacation home paints a rosy if inaccurate picture. If you bother to read my letter to the City Council you would note that at no point did I suggest any law or regulation was broken. This is why I wrote them in the first place. You describe my letter as having incited an uproar while every other comment I have received has been complimentary in the restraint I applied to this same letter and the "tone" being balanced. I suggest this issue has been simmering in our local community and my letter expressed the same frustration that many others are feeling. Our neighborhoods are being invaded. You can paint this experience any way you like including stating that these massive custom homes are raising our home values and bringing business to our town among other positive implications. What you fail to recognize is that this has become an ever increasing invasion of where real people live.

You cited the regulations ,so let's go through them:

1. All costs associated with responding to the VHR are covered by VHR fees. The city collects over \$700,000 from VHR permit fees. These fees pay for enforcement officers, police, staff, city manager and city attorney. The city has been keeping track of these funds and they always have an overage.

You say this covers the full costs. I may be wrong but I would be surprised if a full accounting of the costs to our town are truly covered by I will accept that I may be wrong on this point.

2. Clean Tahoe is a nonprofit and does respond to all trash issues within the city limits, not just VHRs. There are fines associated with a trash violation that would be charged to the home owner to pay for their services.

My comments to the city suggested the Clean Tahoe program receive funding to pick up excess garbage that is left in the street so that it would not be left out until garbage day (Thursday in our neighborhood) and thus preventing your property from being fined.

3. There are five dedicated enforcement officers that are paid by VHR permit fees to patrol and respond to neighbor complaints. At this time there is an average of about one call per day to this enforcement team. Not sure if it is necessary to have five of them; the city is looking at this on a trial basis right now.

I agree that five dedicated enforcement officers is excessive. If management agents were consistent in inspecting their properties to ensure their guests were meeting the stated requirements, fewer police would be required and you would be charged less. In the motel industry, guests are directly observed entering and leaving their rooms. VHR guests arrive without anyone present from the management agent to ensure they are within their agreed limits in the number of guests or vehicles. It is up to the local population adjacent to your business to report when your customers are not complying with your requirements.

4. The management agent or owners are held accountable to inspect their VHRs and ensure they are meeting current guidelines. The home owner pays a fee to the city to send a building inspector to the home for safety concerns.

As I stated in my previous comments, rarely is there a representative from the management agent onsite ensuring that their guests are complying with their requirements. Only if

the neighbors report an issue does anyone know if your limits are being met.

5. There is a process for residents to contest an existing VHR license. Since 2015, the city required a zoning administration hearing to allow residents to protest a new VHR application. The city provided this hearing at an extraordinary cost to the home owner. It has since been proven to be an unsuccessful program. Now, if a VHR creates three permit violations within a 24-month period, their license will be revoked and they will not be able to operate as a vacation rental any longer. These violations can be a public disturbance, noise, trash, parking, and over occupancy issues.

As I stated in my letter, there are no other options for local residence to contest a VHR for issues not covered in the three strikes or initial contracting phase. The home across the street became a VHR with no notice to the local residents. Most residents do not know a VHR is being set up until the signs go up and the visitors arrive.

I have tried to be fair in my comments. I believe there is room in our town for both local home owners and VHRs as there has been in the past. The explosion in the popularity of VHRs over our well used hotels and motels has caused these issues. It is this very success that has brought these problems. It is fair for local home owners to insist that VHR owners and management agents take responsibility for their guests. It is reasonable to want owners and/or management agents at least be present when their guests arrive to ensure their own restrictions are being followed. It is in your interest and it is in the interest of the residents whose neighborhood you are operating in.

Sincerely,

**Scott Ramirez, South Lake Tahoe**

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# Letter: SLT VHR is not a regular bus stop

**Publisher's note:** *This is in response to Scott Ramirez's letter.*

Dear Mr. Ramirez,



Joshua Priou

My name is Joshua Priou and I manage the property that is located directly across the street from you, I have been the sole property manager since it became a vacation home rental in 2012. After reading your article I became quite saddened to hear of your concerns and I felt it was necessary to clarify and shed some light on your comments.

- The home was built in 2007 by a builder who chose to have his family live there. It only became a vacation rental after the new buyer purchased the home in 2011. It was not designed to house as many people as possible. On the contrary, it is only a three-bedroom home that can only house 10 occupants.

- Not that I necessarily agree with a chartered bus arriving in your neighborhood, in this situation it was the right thing to do. These guests actually booked five houses

with our company, your neighbor being one of them. It was a youth group that was chaperoned, and the chartered bus was ideal to avoid parking issues. They only used the bus to drop off on Friday evening and pick up on Sunday morning. It is my understanding that these guests did not over occupy the home, did not create any unreasonable noise, there were no trash issues, and obviously there were no parking problems. The group also paid \$964.44 in transient occupancy taxes to the city of South Lake Tahoe.

- I will comment that I am happy to hear you state “the owners are nice people” and “most of the visitors mind their manners.” But the front of your house has not become a bus stop. Rather, they parked across the street and only for a moment. I presume you will never find a chartered bus arriving at that home again.

- Under the current city of South Lake Tahoe VHR Ordinance Section 3.50.440 Conditions of Operations, Sub-Section 0: “Parking of Commercial vehicle(s) on a vacation home property, except temporarily for durations of less than four hours, shall be prohibited.” The code states that a chartered bus dropping off and picking up a youth group is perfectly acceptable and not a violation of the VHR Ordinance.

- In 2017, this home only booked 70 nights of vacation rental guests. That means that 295 days of the year or 81 percent of the time, that home remained empty. I would think that your peace is overwhelming since you basically have an empty house across the street from you.

- Lake Tahoe Accommodations are great stewards in bringing good guests and nice families to our tourist destination but we only hear of all the negativity about vacation rentals. Based on stats from the city of South Lake Tahoe, 99 percent-plus of all vacation rental reservations do not cause any problems. Instead of hearing from the upset neighbors and the minor problems they are seeing let’s hear

what some of the guests that have stayed at this home have said about visiting Lake Tahoe and enjoying it in a vacation rental.

**Kathy R – Hercules, CA**

**07/12/2017**

My family had a wonderful time. The house was great! I have been coming to Lake Tahoe since I was little, the house was in an area where I had never stayed. The area was great also, nice and quiet and great for taking walks in the evening time.

**Veronica A – Salinas, CA**

**03/01/2016**

This place is beautiful! Better than I expected great location only 15 minute drive to the casinos. We were there for 3 nights and I wish I could of been there longer. The home looks like new with beautiful ceilings and so much detail the floors are heated such a clean place. The rooms were perfect and the beds were so comfortable and cozy. We totally took advantage of the huge kitchen it had all the appliances you need. We enjoyed cooking there and saved a lot of money. I also was able to do a load of laundry they even have detergent for you. They provide the towels, toilet paper, and had enough house cleaning supplies. My kids had a blast in the backyard there was snow we also took a walk down the street there is an area that looks like a forest so it was exciting. Customer service was great very helpful and polite. We rented snowmobiles at a reasonable price \$65 for two and 1/2 hour we had fun! I would totally recommend this home and there is nothing bad I can say except I'm never staying at a hotel from now on... I can't wait to go back! By the way we went to the oyster bar at the Hard Rock Cafe for those who love oysters.

**Morgan D – Turlock, CA**

**01/17/2015**

Our stay at his location was by far a wonderful experience ! My family and I couldn't have been happier to have chosen this cabin. It met all our needs which made our weekend trip so

enjoyable. We loved it so much we are already planning our next trip and def booking this cabin again. I would def recommend this cabin for others to book, and thanks so much to Lake Tahoe Accommodations for your service.

**Lorena V – San Pablo, CA**

**04/02/2014**

This cabin was the best it was so beautiful. Very clean. the kitchen was well equipped with everything we needed. No need to worry about anything. The cabin was a great size for a big family. We are already planning are next trip. Also the people at Lake Tahoe Accommodations are very nice and helpful check in and check out. Was very easy, great trip we will be back.

You offered solutions to the VHR dilemma you are facing. I need to clarify:

1. All costs associated with responding to the VHR are covered by VHR fees. The city collects over \$700,000 from VHR permit fees. These fees pay for enforcement officers, police, staff, city manager and city attorney. The city has been keeping track of these funds and they always have an overage.
2. Clean Tahoe is a nonprofit and do respond to all trash issues within the city limits, not just VHRs. There are fines associated with a trash violation that would be charged to the home owner to pay for their services.
3. There are five dedicated enforcement officers that are paid by VHR permit fees to patrol and respond to neighbor complaints. At this time there is an average of about one call per day to this enforcement team. Not sure if it is necessary to have five of them, the city is looking at this on a trial basis right now.
4. The management agent or owners are held accountable to inspect their VHRs and ensure they are meeting current guidelines. The home owner pays a fee to the city to send a building inspector to the home for safety concerns.



5. There is a process for residents to contest an existing VHR license. Since 2015, the city required a zoning administration hearing to allow residents to protest a new VHR application. The city provided this hearing at an extraordinary cost to the home owner. It has since been proven to be an unsuccessful program. Now, if a VHR creates three permit violations within a 24-month period, their license will be revoked and they will not be able to operate as a vacation rental any longer. These violations can be a public disturbance, noise, trash, parking, and over occupancy issues.

Mr. Ramirez, I am not sure of what your intentions were when you posted this letter to social media and then onto the local papers, but I would think it would be wise to research the information before writing about things you are unaware. I am sorry a bus pulled into your neighborhood for a short time to drop off and pick up chaperoned youth, but this letter has only sparked outrage in the community. Your findings are incomplete and unfounded as actual issues. Maybe it would be wise for you to make your voice heard in public hearings and with the City Council rather than hiding behind social media. Or schedule a meeting with me so that we can discuss our management program, explain how we have your neighborhood's best interest in mind, and allow you to discuss your concerns of having a vacation rental across the street.

**Joshua Priou, director of product development Lake Tahoe Accommodations**

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# Opinion: What's behind this year's crazy winter weather?

By Jennifer Francis

Damage from extreme weather events during 2017 racked up the biggest-ever bills for the U.S. Most of these events involved conditions that align intuitively with global warming: heat records, drought, wildfires, coastal flooding, hurricane damage and heavy rainfall.

Paradoxical, though, are possible ties between climate change and the recent spate of frigid weeks in eastern North America. A very new and “hot topic” in climate change research is the notion that rapid warming and wholesale melting of the Arctic may be playing a role in causing persistent cold spells.

It doesn't take a stretch of the imagination to suppose that losing half the Arctic sea-ice cover in only 30 years might be wreaking havoc with the weather, but exactly how is not yet clear. As a research atmospheric scientist, I study how warming in the Arctic is affecting temperature regions around the world. Can we say changes to the Arctic driven by global warming have had a role in the freakish winter weather North America has experienced?

## A 'dipole' of abnormal temperatures

Weird and destructive weather was in the news almost constantly during 2017, and 2018 seems to be following the same script. Most U.S. Easterners shivered their way through the end of 2017 into the New Year, while Westerners longed for rain to dampen parched soils and extinguish wildfires. Blizzards have plagued the Eastern Seaboard – notably the “bomb cyclone” storm on Jan. 4, 2018 – while California's Sierra Nevada stand nearly bare of snow.

This story is becoming a familiar one, as similar conditions have played out in four of the past five winters. Some politicians in Washington D.C., including President Trump, have used the unusual cold to question global warming. But if they looked at the big picture, they'd see that eastern cold spells are a relative fluke in the Northern Hemisphere as a whole and that most areas are warmer than normal.

A warm, dry western North America occurring in combination with a cold, snowy east is not unusual, but the prevalence and persistence of this pattern in recent years have piqued the interests of climate researchers.

The jet stream – a fast, upper-level river of wind that encircles the Northern Hemisphere – plays a critical role. When the jet stream swoops far north and south in a big wave, extreme conditions can result. During the past few weeks, a big swing northward, forming what's called a “ridge” of persistent atmospheric pressure, persisted off the West Coast along with a deep southward dip, or a “trough,” over the East.

New terms have been coined to describe these stubborn features: “The North American Winter Temperature Dipole,” the “Ridiculously Resilient Ridge” over the West, and the “Terribly Tenacious Trough” in the East.

Regardless what it's called, this dipole pattern – abnormally high temperatures over much of the West along with chilly conditions in the East – has dominated North American weather in four of the past five winters. January 2017 was a stark exception, when a strong El Niño flipped the ridge-trough pattern, dumping record-breaking rain and snowpack on California while the east enjoyed a mild month.

Two other important features are conspicuous in the dipole temperature pattern: extremely warm temperatures in the Arctic near Alaska and warm ocean temperatures in the eastern Pacific. Several new studies point to these “ingredients” as

key to the recent years with a persistent dipole.

### **It takes two to tango**

What role does warming – specifically the warming ocean and air temperatures in the Arctic – play in this warm-West/cool-East weather pattern? The explanation goes like this.

Pacific Ocean temperatures fluctuate naturally owing to short-lived phenomena such as El Niño/La Niña and longer, decades-length patterns. Scientists have long recognized that those variations affect weather patterns across North America and beyond.

The new twist in this story is that the Arctic has been warming at at least double the pace of the rest of the globe, meaning that the difference in temperature between the Arctic and areas farther south has been shrinking. This matters because the north/south temperature difference is one of the main drivers of the jet stream. The jet stream creates the high- and low-pressure systems that dictate our blue skies and storminess while also steering them. Anything that affects the jet stream will also affect our weather.

When ocean temperatures off the West Coast of North America are warmer than normal, as they have been most of the time since winter 2013, the jet stream tends to form a ridge of high pressure along the West Coast, causing storms to be diverted away from California and leaving much of the West high and dry.

If these warm ocean temperatures occur in combination with abnormally warm conditions near Alaska, the extra heat from the Arctic can intensify the ridge, causing it to reach farther northward, become more persistent, and pump even more heat into the region near Alaska. And in recent years, Alaska has experienced periods of record warm temperatures, owing in part to reduced sea ice.

My colleagues and I have called this combination of natural and climate change-related effects “It Takes Two to Tango,” a concept that may help explain the Ridiculously Resilient Ridge observed frequently since 2013. Several new studies support this human-caused boost of a natural pattern, though controversy still exists regarding the mechanisms linking rapid Arctic warming with weather patterns farther south in the mid-latitudes.

### **More extreme weather ahead?**

In response to the strengthened western ridge of atmospheric pressure, the winds of the jet stream usually also form a deeper, stronger trough downstream. Deep troughs act like an open refrigerator door, allowing frigid Arctic air to plunge southward, bringing misery to areas ill-prepared to handle it. Snowstorms in Texas, ice storms in Georgia and chilly snowbirds in Florida can all be blamed on the Terribly Tenacious Trough of December 2017 and January 2018.

Adding icing on the cake is the tendency for so-called “nor’easters,” such as the “bomb cyclone” that struck on Jan. 4, to form along the East Coast when the trough’s southwest winds align along the Atlantic Seaboard. The resulting intense contrast in temperature between the cold land and Gulf Stream-warmed ocean provides the fuel for these ferocious storms.

The big question is whether climate change will make dipole patterns – along with their attendant tendencies to produce extreme weather – more common in the future. The answer is yes and no.

It is widely expected that global warming will produce fewer low-temperature records, a tendency already observed. But it may also be true that cold spells will become more persistent as dipole patterns intensify, a tendency that also seems to be occurring.

It’s hard to nail down whether this weather pattern – overall

warmer winters in North America but longer cold snaps – will persist. Understanding the mechanisms behind these complex interactions between natural influences and human-caused changes is challenging.

Nevertheless, research is moving forward rapidly as creative new metrics are developed. Our best tools for looking into the future are sophisticated computer programs, but they, too, struggle to simulate these complicated behaviors of the climate system. Given the importance of predicting extreme weather and its impacts on many aspects of our lives, researchers must continue to unravel connections between climate change and weather to help us prepare for the likely ongoing tantrums by Mother Nature.

*Jennifer Francis is a research professor at Rutgers University.*

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## **Letter: Tahoe City Lodge transparency lacking**

**Publisher's note:** *This letter was sent to Placer County and TRPA officials. It is published with permission.*

To the North Lake Tahoe Community: Placer County & TRPA Legal Counsel and Staff,

I provided public comment at the Placer Board of Supervisors Jan. 9, 2018, meeting on **agenda item 4A:** granting 60 Tourist accommodation units (TAU) from the county inventory to Kila Properties for the Tahoe City Lodge project.

The county deferred to the applicant, Kila Properties, to

answer my question about the introduction of three bedroom suites which will now be lock-off units for the Tahoe City Lodge which I had stated were not analyzed as part of the Tahoe Basin Area Plan and Tahoe City Lodge EIR/EIS or for public comment. I have asked Kila Properties to provide accountability of all 118 units as additional TAUs may be required for the proposed lock-off units: no response.

Also be aware that the TAUs are being provided to the applicant under an economic sustainability program pool that Placer County purports is necessary due to the tough financial climate in Tahoe to assist developers that need a kick-start. The TAUs are being paid back with transit occupancy tax collected by the condo-hotel with a term of 15 year and is a forgivable loan at a rate of 1.59 percent for almost \$900K (\$879).

It's astounding to me that the applicant doesn't just come out and explain the changes to the proposed room designs. Market demand is an answer, but be upfront with the public that supported you as well as those concerned about its size not being the right fit for such a small area. Understanding the developer must pencil out return on investment, the applicant should be transparent that a condo-hotel of this magnitude (and it being the applicants first project of this size) will have some changes.

The project should have been 78 hotel rooms and 40 condo-hotel rooms, not the other way around as Tahoe City purports to desperately need a new lodging property. The public has been misled into believing this is a boutique hotel. It's a condo project and hotel rooms are ancillary. The 78 condo owners can utilize their investment for up to 90 days with restrictions on the number of consecutive days. Hmmm: I say, prime season days will be utilized by the owners.

Recognize and address that the Bechdolt Building, BofA and Savemart businesses and patrons, etc., will be affected by the

increased volume of vehicles to the hotel, new golf course clubhouse (if it ever gets built), restaurant and new commercial entities. There will be loss of general parking and dedicated business parking which will impact all surrounding businesses. Loss of parking in favor of project only parking is not economically favorable or sustainable to those affected. Is the Tahoe City Lodge Project getting special treatment?

The issues surrounding the multiple use of the easement must be resolved in the interest of public health and safety. Three lanes of traffic where there is only one today is an issue that cannot be ignored.

Where is the criteria and analysis for a valid circulation analysis? Making a left-hand turn from the property on to Highway 28 will be troublesome with line of site issues (at the very least) which will be virtually impossible during the summer and even more dangerous in the winter with icy roads. The majority of the condo and hotel patrons will figure out they need to use the Savemart exit point and no analysis was done for that exit point in the EIR/EIS.

A master plan of how circulation, ingress and egress and shared parking that benefits all the businesses must be drafted and agreed upon. Along with snow removal plans not just for the hotel and golf course. The Tahoe City Lodge project site is not a blank slate. Other businesses do exist adjacent to and nearby the project site.

I still believe that the criteria used to state 132 parking places is adequate is flawed due to the unknown check-in time of guests and golfers along with night time winter activities, employees coming and going all hours of the day/night, restaurant patrons, etc. Furthermore, the variance granted for compact cars did not account for vehicle type utilized in the winter. Can you say snow? Lots of SUVs.



Be transparent that the project envisioned owning the Bechdolt Building as early renderings showed the Bechdolt Building having golf carts stored there and possibly an administrative office for the golf course MOU partners and a small restaurant.

I also provided comment at a recent Tahoe City PUD board meeting about issues between Kila Properties and the TCPUD about the clubhouse component of the project. Will it be rebuilt at current location or will a new building be erected and relocated as stated to the public during environmental analysis? What type of materials will be used to make the clubhouse a quality looking building? Who will run it? And many more: [link to 45-minute public comment](#) between TCPUD and Kila properties to better understand issues.

I requested the Placer BOS have staff conduct a design review of the TC Golf Course clubhouse component of the Tahoe City Lodge Project to resolve design, location, materials, parking, etc. issues: not scheduled as of Jan. 21.

**Ellie Waller, North Shore resident and Citizen Advisory Team member Tahoe Basin Area Plan**

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## **Letter: Suggestions for VHRs and SnowGlobe**

***Publisher's note: This is a letter to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with permission.***

Dear Council Members:

My name is Scott Ramirez, I am a longtime resident of South

Lake Tahoe. Some of you know me and my family and are familiar with our activities to support our town. We are advocates for our community and volunteer where we can.

Today I am writing you to ask that you consider the needs of the residents in your deliberations and actions. Recent changes in our community demand that we all speak to recurring issues that are either not being addressed or are seemingly being glossed over. Specifically, I wish to address two issues: vacation home rentals (VHRs) and SnowGlobe.

### **Vacation home rentals (VHRs):**

I live in the Gardner Mountain area of South Lake Tahoe. I purchased my home in 1996 when I returned after having been away for 10 years for school and work. I grew up in the Bijou area and attended both our local schools and Lake Tahoe Community College before leaving to build my career. I was lucky to be able to return and work in our local schools these past many years. When I purchased my home I purchased what I could afford in a quiet neighborhood with an eye to raising a family. I looked to purchase as much home as I could afford away from the hustle and bustle that tourists bring to our town.

My neighborhood has seen many changes. The formerly empty lot across from my house has since been purchased. The immense house that sits there now was built specifically to house as many people as possible. The builder lived in the home briefly before selling it as a second home and vacation home rental (VHR). On any given weekend we see four to six cars and six or more people staying there. This weekend we were surprised to see a chartered bus arrive and deliver 11 college kids. The bus arrived at roughly 10:15pm on a Friday night and stopped in the street to deliver our new guests and unload their luggage. A similar bus returned the following Sunday to pick this same group.

I wish I could make this simple and say the current owners

were bad and every visitor was rude but that is not the true story. The owners are nice people who are trying to fund their second home by using it as a VHR. Most of our visitors mind their manners. Whether the visitors are good or not or if the home owners are nice is not the point. The point is that our community is rapidly changing and not necessarily for the better. The front of my house is now a bus stop. The house across the street has signs on it declaring the rules for visitation. My neighbors and I are now left wondering will this be a good visit or will this be a bad one. Will there be more cars than the driveway can hold, will they manage the trash and will they quiet down before we need to sleep or will we need to be the bad guys call and complain. Do we need to worry about our kids playing outside?

The new measures to mitigate some of these problems have helped to provide locals tools to respond. The problem is that it remains up to the residents surrounding vacation rentals to report issues when they arrive. We have to be both the inspector and the reporter of activities that should not be going on in our neighborhoods. It is not our job to police other people's businesses. It should be the job of the management agent or the owner if there is no local agent.

I have no illusion that these new businesses are going away. Our community needs flexibility in where our visitors stay and some home owners are paying for their part of Tahoe by renting their homes out. I also do not wish to complain without offering solutions so here is what I suggest:

- All costs associated with responding to VHR issues should be covered by VHR fees.
- A portion of those fees should go to the Clean Tahoe program, which should be provided a list of participating VHRs and asked to help mitigate excess garbage.
- A dedicated enforcement position (police?) should be created to randomly visit VHRs and ensure they are

meeting their parking and occupancy requirements.

- The management agent or owner should be held accountable to inspect their VHRs and ensure they are meeting the current guidelines, it should not be necessary for the surrounding residents to enforce these rules.
- A process for residents to contest an existing VHR license needs to be established beyond the existing reporting process for special circumstances not currently defined.

### **SnowGlobe:**

I will keep this simple. There is no reason an entire neighborhood should be subjected to three days of noise and having access to their homes blocked on an annual basis for a private event. The Al Tahoe, Bijou and Sierra Tract neighborhoods are blasted with sound from SnowGlobe every year. SnowGlobe is exempted from the same rules that apply to the Harveys Outdoor Theater which is required to end their concerts by 10pm. The Harveys event is held in an area zoned for such activities and SnowGlobe is in the middle of three large neighborhoods. I sincerely doubt this would even be a question if the same event was held adjacent to the Tahoe Keys or other wealthy areas. My parents live in the Bijou area near Pioneer Trail adjacent to two current sitting council members. They text us when the music starts because they can feel it inside their home. A friend in the Al Tahoe area tries to leave town because they cannot sleep in their own home due to the sound from these concerts. A community owned and maintained field is not the appropriate place for this event.

- Find an appropriate venue.
- Enforce existing regulations without exemptions.
- Move this away from residential neighborhoods.

These issues are all seemingly related. zoning laws have been overridden in favor of private entities. The council has been consistent in favoring private party interests and their needs

in a hunt to generate questionable revenue gains at the cost to our local residents. Our city incurs expenses related to both these concerns that are not fully covered or funded by those activities. Residents pay in both lost tax revenue to cover those expenses and in terms of having their homes invaded. This is not acceptable and needs to stop.

Please act on behalf of the people who vote for you and for whom you represent. Yes, we need to pursue revenue but not at the cost of our homes and neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

**Scott Ramirez, South Lake Tahoe**

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## **Opinion: Plan would turn Yosemite into refuge for wealthy**

**By Alfonso Orozco, East Bay Times**

Growing up in the Bay Area, wilderness didn't play a big role in my family life. We got outside in local and regional parks. There is no better feeling than hanging out with the whole familia on a hot summer day grilling carne asada, eating juicy watermelon with lime and playing soccer until it gets too dark to see the ball anymore.

But, while those experiences will be forever cherished, there was something missing. After working in national parks across the country, the word that comes to mind is grandeur.

If Donald Trump and his secretary of interior, Ryan Zinke, get their way, millions of people will be shut out from that

experience of wonder and awe, as fees to visit our national parks skyrocket from \$30 to \$70.

**Read the whole story**