

Letter: Bread & Broth thankful for donation

To the community,

Returning for his second Adopt a Day of Nourishment sponsorship of the year, Jeremy Woodford hosted Bread & Broth's Monday meal on Jan. 15. Woodford returned with Barbara and Craig Brittain, who also volunteered at his Jan. 1 sponsorship.

This trio of helpers assisted the B&B volunteers in serving the 76 dinner guests who came to St. Theresa Grace Hall for a hot, nutritious meal. At the Mexican themed dinner, the diners had a choice of beef enchiladas, pork enchiladas, refried beans, festive veggies, green salad, fruit salad and a variety of pies, cookies and cakes for dessert.

Woodford believes that "helping others is the best way to feel better!" As a young boy, he and his family would attend B&B weekly meals and now as an adult he is able to help others and is doing so by feeding those in need. With Woodford's \$300 sponsorship donation, not only is he helping to provide full-course meals, his contribution also helps fund the purchase of fruits, vegetables and dairy products for the food giveaway bags.

B&B is very thankful to Woodford and his helpful crew for their support of the organization's mission of easing hunger. As a nonprofit, all volunteer organization, B&B relies on the on-going donations it receives to continue its service to those struggling with hunger. Thanks to our very generous donors, B&B in addition to serving its Monday meal at Grace Hall, also provides a dinner at Second Serving, a soup and simple entrée meal served every Friday from 4-5pm at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church.

Opinion: March to the Polls – it matters

Publisher's note: This is South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David's speech at the Jan. 20 women's march.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David rallies hundreds on Jan. 20 to make sure they vote to make their voices heard. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Wendy David

When I was 16, the 1964 Republican National Convention was

held at the Cow Palace near San Francisco. The Republican presidential candidate was Barry Goldwater, running against Lyndon Johnson.

Now I can remember very little about the speeches, the platforms, the protests, but I can remember being on the floor (I was a floor page, a helper) and the excitement, everyone covered in the pins of their favorite candidate, the signs bopping up and down all over this cavernous, livestock arena, like they were actual human beings, jumping up and down. I can't actually remember why I got to go, but it was an experience never to be forgotten by this 16-year-old girl.

President Kennedy had been assassinated the November before the convention. There were civil rights protests going on. Protesters, civil rights activists, were being ejected from the convention. I had never seen anything like it.

I tell this story because it set in motion for me a life of never, never, ever missing the right and gift of the opportunity to vote. Never!

I had to be 21 to vote. Heck, by then I was already married with one child and three weeks overdue with the next.

In 1972, I got to vote in my first presidential race, which didn't turn out so well for me. Richard Nixon won with 520 electoral votes to George McGovern's 17. Now that I think of it, it ultimately did not turn out well for Nixon either.

But, still I voted.

I ask myself, what is different today, from 44 years ago. Were we more compelled to vote because of the times of radical change? Was it President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy all being assassinated before our eyes? Was it the Vietnam War, the unjustness of our friends being injured or killed for what? Where was the reason? Was it that our parents' generation had just fought in WWII, literally

preserving our free world. I know my dad was in Europe for the first four years of my parents' marriage.

Whatever it was, we voted, we voted, we voted. We voted for democracy, equality for all races, equal rights in solidarity with all our heroes that fought much more publicly than us! Other women encouraged us as women to stand up, to sit in, to burn our bras! Or just not wear these contraptions to begin with! That alone was a freedom.

Seriously, could all of these freedoms voted for, marched for, sacrificed for, be at risk? Unbelievably, yes. Can we change this? With our vote, yes we can!

Voting is the right we were given by our nation's fathers and then mothers for us as men and women, preserved and protected for us by generations that have fought for these rights.

When the precious right to vote is taken for granted, ignored, or forgotten, while knowing it is vital and integral to who will lead us, and determines how we will be taxed and supported through our government, how health care will be delivered and protected for all and how we fund public education and those that seek a higher education to better themselves, support their families and make the United States a better country, it is time act.

When we are complacent, women's rights, equal rights, human rights suffer. We stand together today because we can no longer afford to let others decide, others vote, others change the progress of the last decades.

Just an aside, our last local election, the vote for our roads initiative, a mere 22 percent of registered voters, voted. One minute, one item on the ballot, one check mark, one decision forfeited to others when we do not vote!

I was fortunate to be able to travel to Kenya in 2012. It was presidential election time in Kenya. Kenya has extreme

corruption in its leadership, the government misappropriating funds allocated to the public schools, for roads, for infrastructure. As we rode in our bus through the little villages on voting day, we saw hundreds of Kenyans walking along the most desolate dirt roads, miles and miles from their huts, dressed in their best, brightest robes and tunics, scarves and skirts, in stark contrast to the dry and barren landscape. Heads high with hope for a better future, they were walking to their polls, an all day walk to vote. They have a very high voting percentage in Kenya, much higher than here in the U.S.

Our walk is shorter; our resolve must be even stronger.

One year ago our first women's march joined hundreds of thousands across the nation to march as well. A march has a purpose, to move forward with resolve, to make a difference and to do it publicly, proudly gaining strength from all others that have joined. Last year we marched in solidarity for our democracy, for our country, committing to each other to make a positive difference where we live.

One year later, and oh, what a year it has been, we march again. We walk with purpose. The theme of this year's march is March to the Polls. Our power has always been our vote. We must march to the polls, educate, contribute, speak up and speak out with our vote, encourage women to run for office, elect women to office, ensure that there is not one elected official anywhere, anymore that has ever used their power to sexually abuse women, has bragged about their stature, has attempted to role back almost 50 years of progression. We must vote to ensure that our nation of immigrants, for we are a nation of immigrants, continues to welcome the huddled masses, yearning to be free.

The time really is up. Time is up for being complacent, waiting for others to lead. We cannot be lazy, tired, ignorant or uninformed. We cannot be quiet. The time is up for being

quiet!

One year from the first Women's March has been a year nothing short of beyond belief. The Me Too movement exposed and kicked sexual abuse in the workplace, government, entertainment, and professional sports out of the darkness and into the light. And it has been glaring! We are here to make sure that no woman or girl ever experiences this evil darkness again.

We can do so much. We have amazing, engaged people. Look at the power here today. Let's band together in electing qualified progressive leaders and if there are good women (and there are), support them as they lead locally so that someday, they may lead us nationally.

Time is up for standing by, for keeping mute, for tolerating less in our leadership. We must continue to march to the voting polls, and by doing so, refuse to tolerate racism, sexism, cronyism and ever, ever supporting or tolerating a candidate that does not respect all women, all races, all colors, all religions, all ethnicities, all genders and the equal rights given to all citizens of the United States. The time was up for that when this nation was formed ... we must preserve it.

I am so proud to be here with all of you. Today you are already making 2018 a year of change. Women all over the United States are saying enough! Let us continue to support each other. Time is up, it is a new time, this is our time!

Opinion: Big media licking

their chops

By Amanda Lotz, The Conversation

The year 2017 ended with a flurry of news affecting all aspects of the media industry. A shift in net neutrality policy and Disney's planned purchase of several Fox assets capped a year that also witnessed the pending merger between Sinclair Broadcast Group and Tribune Media.

As someone who teaches and writes about the media industry, I've been following these developments closely. Whether you're simply concerned about your cable and internet bill, or you're wondering how the elimination of net neutrality will influence access to your favorite websites, here are some key stories and developments you should tune into in 2018.

Buckle up for 'fast lanes'

The repeal of net neutrality – the rules that prevent internet service providers from charging websites to secure preferential treatment – hasn't gone into effect just yet, and legal challenges are in the works. But if the rollback goes through, as it's expected to do, it will likely affect companies and consumers in a couple of ways.

First, the business models of internet-reliant services such as Netflix and Spotify have always assumed that they would have free, unfettered use of the internet. They are among the first places that ISPs could target with fees, and these sites would feel compelled to fork over the money in order to reach consumers at the fastest speeds. At the same time, to offset these new costs, these internet-reliant services will likely pass these costs on to their customers.

Meanwhile, if paid "fast lanes" become standard practice, consumers will also notice that accessing sites that don't or can't pay – such as government, education, libraries and other

non-commercial sites – might seem slower or more difficult to use.

Also, expect to see internet service companies leverage the content they've purchased to encourage more subscribers. Companies that own content – whether it's TV channels or film franchises – will be able charge lower prices than those that license it. (This is at the heart of the AT&T-Time Warner merger discussed below.) For example, if AT&T succeeds in buying Time Warner – which includes HBO – it will likely offer HBO to AT&T subscribers at rates well below what their competitors like Comcast will charge, because these competitors must pay AT&T before they can offer HBO's content.

Investments and mergers galore

Though we're in the midst of an unpredictable regulatory environment, it seems likely that Disney's purchase of Fox assets will proceed.

This won't immediately bring big changes for consumers. As a content company, Disney's primary goal is to maintain and accumulate content assets: television series, films and brands like Star Wars, Marvel and DC. The more it owns, the better positioned it is to negotiate with companies such as Comcast and AT&T that make most of their money from distributing content (via internet, phone, cable service), but are also increasingly purchasing content of their own.

Companies built on owning content don't want to be left behind, so their goal is to be able to possess content so valuable that consumers demand that all distributors offer it. Just as Disney has long used the popularity of ESPN to secure access for less popular channels like ESPN Classics or Disney XD, the more essential content Disney owns, the more leverage it has to charge high fees and ensure distribution for content that's less in demand.

The mergers likely to have a greater impact on consumers are

the Sinclair-Tribune and AT&T-Time Warner mergers. Sinclair and Tribune aren't household names, but they do own several local television stations. Sinclair already owns the most television stations in the U.S. – 193 stations in 89 markets that reach 40 percent of American households. Buying Tribune's stations would enable it to reach 72 percent of American households, even though current rules cap national reach at 40 percent.

The Federal Communications Commission – with its current makeup geared toward deregulation – has signaled its intention to revise ownership rules to enable the merger to proceed. This scale of broadcast ownership is unprecedented in the United States and reminiscent of the late 1990s, when limits on national radio station ownership were eliminated and massive consolidation occurred.

Many have since decried this shift in radio ownership rules. The consolidation led to local job losses, and a recent change in rules allows conglomerates to operate without local studios. Sinclair has already been criticized for forcing all its stations to air the same editorials. This is contrary to broadcast policy that has long prioritized upholding the right of local stations to deliver programming attuned to the interests of their audiences.

The AT&T-Time Warner merger has been in the news for over a year now. The Department of Justice announced plans to sue to prevent the merger in November 2017 and the deal awaits court consideration. This merger deserves a closer look, because like Comcast's 2011 purchase of NBCUniversal, it allows a distribution company (AT&T) to own content: Time Warner's assets include HBO, CNN and the Turner networks. The Comcast merger was ultimately permitted, but it included a number of provisions to maintain a competitive marketplace.

Although much has been made of President Trump's hostility toward CNN as a possible reason for the Department of Justice

lawsuit, the potential anti-competitive actions AT&T could take as owner of Time Warner's most lucrative asset – HBO – is a much better explanation. AT&T could refuse to allow competing services such as Comcast to offer HBO, or make it far more expensive to consumers that subscribe to a different ISP.

Over the next year, we'll see media conglomerates continue to bid for assets and push to roll back rules in an effort to accumulate more power and profit. At the same time, ISPs – many of which already operate as local monopolies or with limited competition – now have permission to delegate access and raise fees.

If history is a guide, consumers will be the big losers.

Amanda Lotz is a fellow at the Peabody Media Center and professor of media studies at the University of Michigan.

Opinion: Too many reasons for women to march



Nearly 400 people on Jan. 20 march from the Hard Rock in Stateline to Lakeview Commons in South Lake. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Last year those who didn't understand the women's marches across the globe thought it was all about the 2016 election. And in some ways it was. But it was also about the person elected, what he represents and that based on the popular vote he lost by millions. It was also about his belief that grabbing a woman's pussy is his right.

Sexual assault is not a right. It is a crime.

It is not locker room banter.



Parents march for their rights and those of their children.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

A year later, on Jan. 20 – the one-year anniversary of the last presidential inauguration – women, men, children and dogs took to the streets again. Today the outcry is the same, yet different. It's not just about what is going on in Washington, D.C., as unbelievable as that seems at times, but it's about the abuses women have been suffering for centuries that are just now coming to light.

What is it with men? Why do they think it's OK to sexually, physically, emotionally or in any other way abuse women?

Does it really make you feel powerful? Do you really not care about the person you are victimizing?



A man holds a sign telling the world what he thinks. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By no means are men as a whole abusers. I'd argue more are gentlemen than not. At the marches it's wonderful to see all the men standing right beside the multitudes of women. They are as appalled as the women at what is going on.

The marchers, they want men everywhere, not just politicians to figure out what the #MeToo movement is all about. To think hard if they have been part of the problem. No matter the answer, it's time to be part of the solution.



South Shore women show their solidarity. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The president of the United States thinks there are shithole countries. The way he treats the office, women and people in general is appalling, degrading, shameful and embarrassing. Instead of making America great, he seems to be turning it into a shithole – at least when it comes to common decency.

Revelations about his sexual escapades keep making headlines, including interactions with multiple porn stars during the American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament in Stateline in 2006. This, while his wife was at home with their young son.

He has stained the oval office in a way that hasn't been done since that famous blue dress.



A couple makes their opinions known at Lakeview Commons. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Even a consenting intern is not excusable. It's still abuse of power, and certainly the office. Men degrading women crosses political aisles and permeates all professions.

It has to end. That is what these marches are about. It's about no longer being silent. It's about solidarity. It's about making a statement for what is right. It's about equality.

It's time for change: march, vote, educate, stand up, speak out, say no, report the abuse, be intolerant of intolerance.

Opinion: States won't protect endangered species

By Alejandro E. Camacho and Michael Robinson-Dorn, *The Conversation*

Since the Endangered Species Act became law in 1973, the U.S. government has played a critical role in protecting endangered and threatened species. But while the law is overwhelmingly popular with the American public, critics in Congress are proposing to significantly reduce federal authority to manage endangered species and delegate much of this role to state governments.

States have substantial authority to manage flora and fauna in their boundaries. But species often cross state borders, or exist on federal lands. And many states either are uninterested in species protection or prefer to rely on the federal government to serve that role.

We recently analyzed state endangered species laws and state funding to implement the Endangered Species Act. We concluded that relevant laws in most states are much weaker and less comprehensive than the federal Endangered Species Act. We also found that, in general, states contribute only a small fraction of total resources currently spent to implement the law.

In sum, many states currently are poorly equipped to assume the diverse responsibilities that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries (collectively, “the Services”) handle today. In our view, therefore, devolving federal authority over endangered species management to the states will almost certainly weaken protections for those species and

undermine conservation and recovery efforts.

Science-based decisions

The Endangered Species Act requires the Services to list and then protect endangered fish, wildlife and plants and their habitat, working with expert scientists, state authorities and citizens. It prohibits anyone from harming any listed species, and requires decisions about whether a species is endangered to be made “solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available.” While costs are clearly relevant to protecting at-risk species, the law is clear that determinations about whether a species is endangered or likely to be harmed by a particular activity should not be based on the decision’s potential economic impacts.

In addition, the act directs the Services to cooperate as much as practical with states on conserving listed species. This may include actions such as signing management agreements and providing funding to state agencies. The law also allows citizens to petition to list species as endangered and file lawsuits to help enforce the act.

Congress takes aim

Critics argue, often with little proof, that federal endangered species protection is too cumbersome and costly, and that the agencies act without sufficient input from states and localities. Some contend that endangered species protection can be more effectively and efficiently accomplished by state agencies alone.

The House Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Utah Republican Rob Bishop, has approved five bills that would weaken key provisions of the Endangered Species Act. These measures would:

- Allow the Services to deny that a species is endangered (and forgo protection of that species) due to economic

impacts of listing.

- Require the Services to classify indiscriminately any data submitted by states, tribes or counties for listing decisions as “best available science.”
- Make it harder for citizens to challenge government actions under the ESA by limiting recovery of attorneys’ fees in citizen suits.
- Remove protection for at-risk non-native species within the United States.
- Lift federal protection for gray wolves in the Great Lakes states and Wyoming.

Observers expect similar legislation to be introduced in the Senate. And Utah Sens. Mike Lee and Orrin Hatch have reintroduced a bill that would remove all federal ESA protection for species found within the borders of a single state. Such action would eliminate federal protection for hundreds of currently listed species, including the Florida panther and Florida manatee.

These legislators argue that states should play a larger role. When a federal appeals court found that the Endangered Species Act barred the Services from transferring management of federally threatened prairie dogs in Utah to the state in 2016, Bishop asserted that “Utahns have proven they can maintain prairie dogs. The only thing impeding the state is federal meddling.”

More recently, Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso said, “Endangered species don’t care whether the federal government, or a state government, protects them. They just want to be protected.”

State laws are weaker and narrower

Our review shows that most states are poorly positioned to assume primary responsibility for endangered species protection. State laws generally are weaker and less comprehensive than the Endangered Species Act. West Virginia

and Wyoming do not protect endangered species at all through state law. In 30 states, citizens are not allowed to petition for listing or delisting of a species.

Only 18 state laws protect all federally listed endangered species found in that state. Another 32 states provide less coverage than the federal statute. And 17 states do not cover endangered or threatened plants.

Only 27 states require use of scientific evidence in listing and delisting decisions. In 38 states, regulators are not required to consult with the state's wildlife experts for state-level projects.

Unlike the Endangered Species Act, 38 state laws do not authorize regulators to designate critical habitat for threatened or endangered species – areas essential for those organisms to survive. Only two state laws require recovery planning, only five state laws restrict harm to important endangered species habitat, and only 16 states protect endangered species on privately owned lands.

Finally, state-reported expenditures make up only five percent of all annual spending to implement the Endangered Species Act. In short, states will need to massively increase spending to maintain current levels of protection.

Better ways to enhance state roles

We agree that there is a need for better collaboration between states and federal agencies. States and tribes may have important knowledge and data that can complement the substantial expertise and resources provided by federal authorities. But that information alone should not substitute for the science-based decision making required by the ESA.

Furthermore, the Endangered Species Act already provides ample opportunities for federal and state collaboration. Many charges of poor coordination appear to be thinly veiled

attempts to reduce protections, rather than efforts to promote meaningful collaboration. In our view, effective coordination under the ESA requires an enduring commitment to conservation and recovery by both the Services and the partnering state.

Congress should find ways to provide more incentives for conservation on private lands, which provide habitat for nearly 80 percent of listed species. The Endangered Species Act already encourages federal collaboration with states and private landowners, and there are many examples of successful partnerships.

Several studies have shown that listing species and developing conservation and recovery plans improves their status, provided that recovery efforts are funded. Rather than dismantling the Endangered Species Act, Congress needs to provide more resources to achieve its goals. The most productive strategies would be increasing funding for listing, conservation and recovery; systematically implementing and enforcing the law; and developing strategies for managing looming stressors to ecosystems, such as global climate change.

Alejandro E. Camacho is a professor of law and director of Center for Land Environment and Natural Resources at UC Irvine and Michael Robinson-Dorn is a clinical professor of law at UC Irvine.

Opinion: Touting success of TRPA Regional Plan

By Jim Lawrence

Conserving and restoring Lake Tahoe's natural environment and revitalizing its communities requires a delicate balancing act. Historically, building consensus around how to strike that balance has been one of the region's greatest difficulties.

Lake Tahoe reached its strongest-ever consensus on that balance with the 2012 Regional Plan and its focus on sustainable redevelopment to restore natural areas, bring legacy development up to modern environmental standards, and create walkable, bikeable, and vibrant town centers.



Jim Lawrence

This past December marked five years since the adoption of the landmark Regional Plan Update, and all around the Tahoe basin we are seeing signs of progress for the vitality of our communities and the health of Tahoe's treasured environment.

Momentum continues to build. In February, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board will consider approving the Meyers Area Plan and its vision for improving the Meyers community in El Dorado County. If approved, it would be the fifth area plan adopted to implement the Regional Plan.

Plans bring progress

Douglas County has adopted the South Shore Area Plan, which covers the casino core and Lower Kingsbury. The city of South Lake Tahoe has adopted the Tourist Core Area Plan, which extends from Heavenly Village to Ski Run Boulevard, and the Tahoe Valley Area Plan, which is centered around the Y

intersection of highways 50 and 89. Placer County has adopted the Tahoe Basin Area Plan, which covers all 72 square miles of the county in the Tahoe basin.

The Regional Plan offers communities with area plans a range of incentives to help revitalize their economies and restore the environment. Five years into the new Regional Plan, nearly one-quarter of the Tahoe basin and two-thirds of its town centers are covered by an area plan, and we are seeing a renaissance with hundreds of millions of dollars of private and public investment in these area plan boundaries.

Redevelopment continues at the Y in South Lake Tahoe with new retail stores and breweries, construction of new facilities at Barton Health, and a new climbing gym set to open this spring. The area is seeing major road improvements on Highway 50 and continued progress on the design and development of the Tahoe Valley Greenbelt, a project that will restore environmentally-sensitive areas, reduce storm water pollution, and provide new green space and shared-use paths for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Edgewood Lodge, which opened last summer in Stateline, is a prime example of how redevelopment can benefit the economy and environment. The project reduced blight, acquiring the development rights needed for the world-class destination resort by demolishing rundown motels. It also created 33,000 square feet of new stream environment zone on the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course that provides fish and wildlife habitat and reduces the amount of polluted storm water reaching Lake Tahoe.

On the North Shore, the Tahoe City Lodge project approved with the Tahoe Basin Area Plan promises to bring a showcase redevelopment project to Tahoe City. The project will transform a blighted property into an energy-efficient lodge with a mix of hotel rooms and suites, a ground floor restaurant, a rooftop pool and bar, new conference facilities,

a new clubhouse for the Tahoe City Golf Course, and parking lot charging stations for electric vehicles. In addition to building the first new North Shore hotel in nearly half a century, the project will reduce coverage at the site by more than 10,000 square feet and restore nearly two acres of sensitive stream environment zone.

Through partnership and collaboration and a growing recognition that the health of the environment and economy are inextricably linked at Lake Tahoe, we are seeing incredible progress around the basin. But we must do more.

From improving forest health to streamlining project permitting, creating a new shoreline plan, and guiding needed transportation and transit service improvements, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is working on strategic initiatives to help accelerate investment and project implementation to meet the Regional Plan goals for a healthier environment and revitalized communities.

Chief among those initiatives is the work we are doing to improve the unique development rights system that was put in place to stop the runaway development that threatened Lake Tahoe decades ago. While that system was effective in stopping runaway development, today it poses major hurdles for the redevelopment projects we need to revitalize our communities and restore sensitive natural areas like meadows and wetlands that play a critical role in Tahoe's health.

Partnering with other public agencies, community members, investors, and environmental groups, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is working to move forward this year with changes to the development rights system that will help simplify investing in environmentally-beneficial projects at Lake Tahoe.

Lake Tahoe has much to be proud of five years after the adoption of the 2012 Regional Plan, but it has much more to

do. By continuing to work together to implement this broadly-supported plan, I am confident we can make even greater strides for the health of our environment and communities in years to come.

Jim Lawrence is chair of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board.

Opinion: What Sessions doesn't understand about medical marijuana

By C. Michael White

On Jan. 4, Attorney General Jeff Sessions rescinded the Cole memo, a 2013 document that limits federal enforcement of marijuana laws.

This opens the door for a crackdown in the nine states with legal recreational marijuana.

The Cole memo is one of two documents that prevent the U.S. Justice Department from treating marijuana as a Schedule I drug, defined as a substance with no accepted medical treatment and high potential for abuse. The other is the 2014 Rohrabacher–Farr amendment. This legislation bars the Department of Justice from spending any funds to keep states from implementing their own laws about “the use, distribution, possession or cultivation of medical marijuana.”

The amendment's language needs to be reinserted into law each year – and it's currently set to expire on Jan. 18. That would leave patients in the 29 states with legal medical marijuana

without their treatments and at risk of prosecution.

I have researched a number of drugs of abuse and natural products for safety and effectiveness. Just because a drug has abuse potential doesn't mean it's always bad and just because it's natural doesn't mean it's always safe. While I'm no fan of legalizing recreational marijuana use, I believe there has to be special dispensation for patients with a legitimate medical need.

Medical marijuana works

There are approximately 1.2 million users of medical marijuana in these 29 states. Some of the most common ailments include pain or muscle spasms, nausea and vomiting, cancer, PTSD, seizures and glaucoma.

The body has a system of receptors that can be stimulated by the chemicals in marijuana, called cannabinoids. In animal studies, cannabinoids have been used to treat symptoms like harmful weight loss, vomiting, seizures and fluid pressure in the eyes.

There isn't much human research on medical marijuana, thanks to the product's illegal status and a lack of federal research funding. Large trials are nearly impossible to conduct, since products are often adulterated and the concentrations of cannabinoids vary from plant to plant.

Even so, human trials from around the world and pockets of the U.S. offer modestly strong evidence of marijuana's benefits in a number of disorders, such as intractable nausea and vomiting, chronic pain and severe muscle spasms and epilepsy.

For example, a study published in May looked at the effects of cannabidiol – an active marijuana compound that does not cause euphoric high or hallucination – on children with Dravet syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterized by frequent, severe drug-resistant seizures. Those who took cannabidiol cut

their median number of convulsive seizures per month in half, from 12 to six. These findings may be applicable to other people with hard-to-treat seizures.

I bring up this example because it uses the highest quality study design. Also, seizures are not subjective symptoms like pain or nausea that critics may be skeptical of.

When patients become criminals

Different types of THC-infused confections on display at a pot dispensary in Eugene, Ore. AP Photo/Ryan Kang

In my home state of Connecticut, medical marijuana is legal. Doctors are required to certify that potential medical marijuana users have a disease for which there is adequate medical evidence for marijuana's benefit. The patient then visits a licensed dispensary facility, where a pharmacist helps to select the type of product that would work best.

In such a dispensary, pharmacists know the exact amount of the active chemicals that each product contains. Unlike illegal marijuana, their products aren't contaminated with heavy metals, bacteria, fungi, herbicides or pesticides.

What if patients can no longer access these products? They will either have to go without and lose the benefits of their treatment, leading to moderately intense marijuana withdrawal symptoms, such as insomnia, chills, shakiness and stomach pain.

Or, they might try to switch to the black market, where products may be inconsistent and prosecution is possible. In so doing, they would be supporting organized crime and exposing themselves to additional dangers. I especially worry about children with epilepsy who might have to use illegal marijuana that gives them a high due to the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) rather than a legal version with little to no THC.

A balanced approach

Since 2014, the Rohrabacher-Farr amendment has been routinely included in the appropriations language with support from both parties. But in the past year, things have broken down. So far, the amendment has survived through resolutions to extend government spending, but it's unclear whether it will appear in the new federal budget.

Sessions has already written to members of Congress asking them not to support this amendment, saying it inhibits the department's authority. A new subcommittee at the Department of Justice plans to assess the legalized use of marijuana.

Legal recreational marijuana comes with potential benefits and drawbacks to society, and I'm not sure yet that we know what the impact will be over the long term. But the research on medical marijuana is clear: Marijuana has legitimate medical uses. It should not be a Schedule I drug and should not be denied to patients. There's virtually no upside to banning a potentially effective therapy for patients with diseases like cancer, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy.

C. Michael White is a professor and head of the department of pharmacy practice at the University of Connecticut.

Opinion: Calif. should follow Trump's lead with tax cuts

By Ted Gaines

President Trump's federal tax reform held up a mirror to tax-loving California politicians and they are afraid of what they

saw.

At major issue to the panicked Progressive political class is the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, which, until now, has allowed taxpayers who itemize the ability to deduct their state and local taxes on their federal tax returns. The average California SALT deduction per claimant was nearly \$39,000 in 2015, but the deduction is now capped at \$10,000. California was the largest beneficiary of the now-reduced deduction, with tax filers claiming roughly \$100 billion in 2014. This deductibility has softened the blow of our state's punishing tax regimen and helped cover up the fact that our politicians have been shoving our taxes into the stratosphere.



Ted Gaines

With the capped deduction, coupled with California's sky-high taxes, could California taxpayers lead another Prop. 13-like revolt and tear down the high-tax, high-spending edifice that so comfortably houses fat cat politicians and their political allies?

It's this fear that's led to the absurd, over-the-top howling about the tax bill, with embarrassingly apocalyptic rhetoric about this much-needed reform and the tired talking point that the Trump plan, by letting people keep more of their own money, was somehow "looting" the treasury. That would only be true if all money you earned belonged to the government and was doled back out to you by their grace. But that belief says much more about entitled legislators than the legislation itself.

The problem is not SALT deductibility, it's the taxes themselves.

California's top marginal tax rate of 13.3 percent is the nation's highest, by far. Our state's base sales tax rate of 7.25 percent is also the nation's highest, and local add-ons push it above 10 percent in some cities.

Even those punitive rates might be tolerable if California delivered first-class infrastructure or schools, for example, but our roads are crumbling and our schools hug the bottom of the achievement curve. What exactly have California taxpayers been getting for their money, whether it's deductible or not?

At the very least, SALT changes could spotlight the terrible bargain California taxpayers get and drag state legislators into an era of greater accountability.

But until then, California politicians will be working overtime to figure out an end-around on the President's tax plan that will keep taxes high but allow continued SALT deductions, so they can pull the veil back over the people's eyes.

I have a better solution and I'm going to introduce a bill to make it happen: Cut California taxes. By lowering our income tax rates, we could help people in every tax bracket keep more of their paychecks, spreading prosperity throughout the state.

Instead of investing time and energy scheming a way around the Trump plan, let's take this opportunity to provide tax relief to California's citizens.

Instead of complaining about deductibility, let's take a page from the majority of states with far lower taxes and give Californians lower taxes themselves. Why not aim to add to the tally of the six states, including deep blue Washington, with no state income tax at all?

Letting people and businesses keep more of their money expands our economy and personal freedom. Trump knows this far better than California's leading politicians, who will fight tooth-and-claw to keep state taxes among the highest in the country.

Here's hoping they fail, and President Trump's tax cut becomes the catalyst for a tax cut in the Golden State.

State Sen. 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.

Opinion: Parking an issue because of poor planning

By Bruce Grego

Milton Friedman, who in 1976 was awarded a Nobel Prize in Economics, once said, if you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in five years there'd be a shortage of sand.

Well, in the last 50 years, local government in conjunction with the TRPA, and other regional and state agencies, has been controlling parking with every building permit issued with the result that we have a parking shortage and a transportation crisis – we have run out of sand.



Bruce Grego

I have read your **recent articles** about the parking problems in Stateline and about **Harrah's** protecting its parking from Heavenly gondola skiers. Then, we have had two additional articles about parking published in last couple of weeks, one written by **Joanne Marchetta**, the executive director of the TRPA and the other council member by Austin Sass. Both Ms. Marchetta and Mr. Sass feel that we need more planning, workshops, and spending of more tax dollars to address these problems. No solutions, just lip service.

What can one conclude? First, that this parking mess is the direct result of the failure of planning, and the failure of planning to plan for reality. We are spending millions of dollars on planning at every level of government in the basin, and with this spending, we should have never come to this point. When I think of planning, it should be a better method of solving anticipated problems, and solving those problems in advance so that life for the common person is better. However, as admitted by Mr. Sass and Ms. Marchetta, this problem with parking is not unexpected, but out of design. Governments in the basin seek to deprive us of our choice of transportation. They don't want us to drive our cars, they want us to use buses, and other means of mass transportation whether they work or not. Since, they cannot expect the public, the voters, to embrace their "transportation vision", they instead, through long term "planning", create a transportation crisis with the hope of "driving" us to their solution.

Second, it's not unreasonable to expect a private business, such as Harrah's, to protect its parking for its customers.

What is not reasonable is the approval of these large projects in Stateline where the developers failed to accommodate the parking demands accurately that will be generated at their development site. For example, while the Marriott's hotel has parking only for its guests, the parking garage is clearly inadequate to accommodate the demands of the restaurants, theaters, and shops located within the Heavenly Village and the needs created by the gondola. To add to this problem, a number of years ago the city placed no parking signs throughout the Stateline area where off street parking had been allowed since the formation of the city.

It's wrong to expect adjacent smaller properties to carry the burden of unsupported parking demands of these large projects. Further, the public should not have to bear the costs of finding the solution to this parking problem. Also, our visitors should have a better experience in the Stateline area than trying to find parking, dealing with parking meters, and dealing with parking tickets.

What is the solution? Certainly, reviewing the condition for the issuance of the building permits for all these large projects, and the representations made by the applicants, to determine whether developers' obligation concerning adequate parking has been met and, perhaps, explore the suspension of the "occupancy permit" for such projects is in order until the direct beneficiaries of these projects institute an acceptable parking solution that can accommodate their current vehicle parking demand. Eliminating "no parking signs" in Stateline would help.

Make no mistake; public transportation has a role in our transportation needs. But despite heavy governmental subsidies, it loses money and has inadequate ridership in most places in California. It seems best used by employees going to and from work, not by tourists traveling by long distances by car or local residents dealing with life's daily demands.

Finally, we should challenge the planners in the basin, those in work at the TRPA, the TTD, and even those that work for the city, to stop using their vehicles for all purposes, and use only public transportation or private non-motorize vehicles (bikes) to go to work, take their children to school and after school activities, shop at Costco in Carson City, timely attend public meetings, purchasing 10 bags of groceries at Raley's (and bring them home), go the movies, visit their family doctors, take their family to church, and, of course, go on vacation. Show us how it's done and show us that public transportation is the way of the future for our transportation needs. I bet if such a program would be instituted, realistic solutions to our transportation needs will soon be forthcoming.

Bruce Grego is a resident of South Lake Tahoe and former City Council member.

Opinion: Facts prove VHRs are not a problem

By Brad Schiller

An ongoing war is being waged against VHRs, fueled by a very small minority of residents and even a smaller number of onerous VHR renters. It is time to take stock of the facts and consider the role that VHRs play in the local economy.

VHR opponents

Those residents opposed to VHRs offer a litany of reasons for their opposition. The most common reason is noise: VHR renters allegedly come here to party and apparently do so all night.

Residents also complain that VHR renters park too many cars, thereby depriving full-time residents of scarce parking space. Those same renters are blamed for traffic congestion, lengthening the time it takes full-time residents to get across town. Some opponents have also suggested in (opinion pieces) that the influx of VHR residents has increased area pollution. For these many reasons, opponents want to curtail and even ban VHRs in South Lake Tahoe.

Incidence of complaints

Given the intensity of the VHR opposition, the actual number of complaints is surprisingly small. In the last calendar quarter for which official (South Lake Tahoe) data is available (July-September) there were only 206 complaints initiated by neighbors. If each of those complaints referred to a different VHR, that would represent 11 percent of all permitted VHRs. That would be the worst-case scenario for VHRs. But that statistic paints an overly pessimistic view of VHR behavior. First, only 63 violations were issued based on those complaints, representing less than 3.5 percent of permitted VHRs. Second, the city itself initiated 45 complaints, resulting in 14 violations for unpermitted VHRs and a handful of other transgressions. So, the number of neighbor-initiated violations was less than 50 over a three-month period. That is way less than one per day for the entire city. And 88 percent of those violations occurred in the "mega" VHRs that are permitted to have 10 or more occupants.

Despite the low incidence of actual violations, the City Council toughened VHR regulations, effective Dec. 22, 2017. In the first two weeks of the toughened enforcement how much changed? Not much. There were only 58 complaints in the period Dec. 20-Jan. 1, a period that encompassed not only New Year's but also SnowGlobe. Of those 58 complaints, only 23 were verified, of which 16 were for street parking. The three noise complaints (on New Year's) accounted for 0.016 percent of all

permitted VHRs.

Concentration of complaints

Even the absurdly low number of complaints overstates the true incidence of VHR problems. The reality is that a disproportionate percentage of these complaints come from only a handful of fierce VHR opponents. On Thanksgiving, for example, there were five citywide complaints. Four of them were lodged by the same individual. In my neighborhood, one resident has a large sign posted proclaiming that he will oppose all VHRs. He trolls outside his electrified fence looking for problems he can report. Enforcement officers almost always decide that the complaint was unjustified. City personnel are all too familiar with the half dozen residents who account for a large share of their responses.

Cost to the city

Despite the extremely low incidence of VHR disturbances, the city has not only tightened regulations on VHR owners but chosen to spend a lot more money on code enforcement. In November, the City Council approved hiring three more enforcement officers, bringing the potential total to five. One of them is intended to be full time. Think about the benefit/cost ratio here. A force of five enforcement officers, plus regular police, to identify and cite an average of less than one VHR violation per day. Who can possibly justify that kind of budget? Especially in a city where voters rejected higher taxes to pay for road improvements.

Then there is the value of VHRs. VHRs are popular everywhere because they offer comfortable and private quarters that hotels and motels can't match. Contrary to what opponents allege, our VHRs are more attractive to families with children than to hard-core partiers. Partiers much prefer Opal, Peek, and partying with Arty over quiet neighborhoods. The families renting VHRs are a great source of income not only for the

city, which collected over \$3 million in TOT revenues in the last fiscal year, but also to the entire gamut of businesses in South Lake – from McDonald's to Heavenly ski school. The visitors who stay in VHRs are a vital part of the local economy.

Unjust discrimination

Economics aside, one might also consider the equity issue wrapped up in the VHR debate. Why is it considered illegal for a VHR renter to park on a public street that is open to everyone else? Why is the noise from a VHR party or hot tub any more onerous than the same nuisance from a permanent renter or owner? Why is the traffic congestion caused by VHR renters any different from the congestion caused by other residents or visitors? Do VHR renters create more litter or pollution than other visitors or residents? And then there is the issue of now mandatory bear boxes for VHRs. Most VHRs have a sequence of short-term renters and must clean the home and dispose of the garbage before the next visitor arrives. In the 30 years that I have owned VHRs in the city, we have never used the city's trash services. Yet, we have paid for that service every month. If we don't leave trash out for the city to pick up, why require a bear box? Are other VHRs more prone to "bear raids" than neighboring residences? Or is this just another mechanism to discourage VHRs? It's time for the city and the county to consider seriously the unjust discrimination they are imposing on people who own or rent VHRs in our community.

Brad Schiller is a professor of economics and longtime VHR owner in South Lake Tahoe.