

Letter: Camp Rich signal slowing down traffic

Publisher's note: *The following letter was sent to Caltrans.*

□ Last year as part of the Hwy. 89 upgrade between South Lake Tahoe Y and Camp Richardson, Caltrans put in a pedestrian beacon in hopes of reducing the backup to the car traffic on Hwy. 89. Moving forward to the first holiday weekend (Memorial Day) the new pedestrian beacon at Camp Rich is now stopping all the cars more now than before it was put in because the Beacon is an "on demand" setting, so whenever a pedestrian pushes the button, it stops the cars.

The cars now have to wait, even though there are no pedestrians walking across. This causes even more cars to be backed up because they have to wait for the cycle to finish. It is worse now than before the beacon was put in.

Caltrans, you need to change this to a longer cycle so that the pedestrians have to wait longer, maybe 2-3 minutes or whatever is good just like the cities or any high car traffic area.

I have never seen the cars backed up as far as they are now. The backup (stop and go) is now well past 15th Street toward the Y, which is 1.5 miles. The traffic is also negatively effected on the eastbound side of Camp Rich. □

Bob Sweatt, South Lake Tahoe

Note: Caltrans says they are looking into the issue.

Opinion: Seniors get shaft in EDC budget

Updated 9:12am:

By Larry Weitzman

A day or two before the official release of the El Dorado County budget, informed sources have told this columnist that among the budget cuts will be the elimination of EDC's senior legal program, a program that is funded about 65 percent by the county, and by about 35 percent private donations and a small federal government grant.

This program provides direct legal services to seniors in landlord/tenant issues/estate questions/elder abuse/long-term care planning and protecting seniors from being taken advantage of. The service is now offered without charge. According to my sources, the entire senior legal staff will be cut.



Larry Weitzman

While there are rumored to be other large cuts in the EDC budget such as to the Community Development Agency, there are no positions cuts to the county administration. The county recently spent more than the entire senior legal staff budget in the hiring of a new county public information officer and filling the position of the assistant director of administration and finance for Health and Human Services.

The former mayor of Placerville and now the chair of Friends of Seniors, Kathi Lishman, said the following when learning of the elimination of senior legal: "I am shocked to hear about senior legal, as it seems to have come out of nowhere, and is quite alarming. The services they provide to EDC seniors are extremely important. Senior legal has received about \$95,000 in donations from the community in the past 12 months, and meets with about 2,000 clients a year. Some of the elderly are home bound or institutionalized.

"They also provide legal resources for adult protective services. The programs that provide direct service to clients are the first ones to have their budgets reduced or cut, while overhead costs to these programs continually go up, often due to increased administrative costs.

"The Board of Supervisors cannot make these cuts in a vacuum."

In a phone call with Board of Supervisors Chair Shiva Frentzen, she was also alarmed by the proposed complete cut of county support for senior legal. Frentzen says she does not want that to happen and it needs be examined further.

Former El Dorado County Community Services-Human Services director for 25 years (1982-2007), John Litwinovich, had the following to say of the proposed cuts: "At this point, I think adding administrative positions is a mistake. The costly creation of agency level administrative positions is the principal reason senior services are in jeopardy. Now is not the time to be dismantling the needed senior continuum of care prior boards developed over decades. Rather, it's time to reconsider administrative layers and positions that have been added in recent years, positions that have drawn resources away from service.

"Priority should be given to those county employees who directly serve the public, be they sheriff's deputies, road maintenance workers, front desk clerks, kitchen staff who

prepare meals for home bound seniors, or senior legal attorneys, on whom so many vulnerable elders depend. These and other direct service positions, rather than an ample administrative structure, constitute county government's *raison d'être*."

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Borrowing scheme for CalPERS deserves scrutiny

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee



Dan Walters

Over the last few decades, the once-straightforward process of fashioning a state budget devolved into duplicitous gimmickry.

Governors and legislators would paper over gaps with off-the-books loans, creative bookkeeping and deliberate falsehoods.

When Jerry Brown resumed the governorship in 2011, he pledged to end fiscal hijinks and align the budget with reality, as harsh as it may be.

[Read the whole story](#)

Letter: Kirkwood workers help at Bread & Broth

To the community,

On May 8, Emily Davis, Kirkwood Mountain Resort Human Resources supervisor, experienced her first Adopt A Day volunteer stint at a Bread & Broth Monday meal.

“It was such a wonderful and fulfilling experience giving back to the community like this,” was Davis’ description of setting up and serving a healthy and hearty dinner to grateful guests.

“This was our first time here and we are all sincerely impressed by the quality of service and immense dedication the team here has. Thank you all for all you do.”

The B&B volunteers are dedicated and hardworking, and they thoroughly enjoy having AAD sponsor crews join them who are just as hardworking and dedicated as they are. On May 8 the Kirkwood AAD sponsor crew included Davis and fellow Kirkwood team members Greg Carlson, senior HR manager; Elizabeth Day, recruiting manager; and Rebecca Del Pozo, recruiter. B&B would like to thank this crew for their incredible assistance and acts of kindness to all of the evening dinner guests.

Thank you also to the Vail EpicPromise Grant Program for funding the AAD hosted by Kirkwood Mountain Resort on May 8. The EpicPromise Grant Program is responsible for funding many wonderful programs in the Lake Tahoe south shore and B&B appreciates being one of the recipients of grant funds which sponsors monthly Adopt A Days throughout the year.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: When Pac-Man started a national media panic

By Michael Z. Newman

In the early 1980s, spurred by the incredible popularity of Atari, Space Invaders and Pac-Man, everyone seemed to be talking about video games, if not obsessively playing them. A 1982 cover of Time magazine screamed “GRONK! FLASH! ZAP! Video Games are Blitzing the World!” If you turned on the radio that year you’d likely hear “Pac-Man Fever,” a Top 40 hit by Buckner & Garcia. Children begged their parents to buy them an Atari for Christmas or to give them a few quarters to drop in Pac-Man’s coin slot. Hollywood movies like “Fast Times at Ridgemont High” presented the video arcade as a quintessential teenage hangout.

Decades later they give off a more innocent retro cool vibe, but arcade video games were treated as objects of urgent fascination and concern when they were new. Kids regarded them as the ultimate playthings and competed to master them and set the high score, or the record for longest time playing Asteroids. Some grown-ups enjoyed them too. Many in positions of authority expressed fears about harmful effects of the electronic amusements and wanted to ban them or regulate their use.

Other adult authorities saw video games not just as diversions or toys, but as essential tools for training young people for a future of high-tech, computerized work and leisure. A magazine story framed the issue as one of essential education in the technology of tomorrow: “Is it somehow more valuable to learn Missile Command than to learn English?”

This moment in the history of pop culture and technology might have seemed unprecedented, as computerized gadgets were just becoming part of the fabric of everyday life in the early '80s. But we can recognize it as one in a predictable series of overheated reactions to new media that go back all the way to the invention of writing (which ancients thought would spell the end of memory). There is a particularly American tradition of becoming enthralled with new technologies of communication, identifying their promise of future prosperity and renewed community. It is matched by a related American tradition of freaking out about the same objects, which are also figured as threats to life as we know it.

The emergence of the railroad and the telegraph in the 19th century, and of novel 20th-century technologies like the telephone, radio, cinema, television and the internet were all similarly greeted by a familiar mix of high hopes and dark fears. In "Walden," published in 1854, Henry David Thoreau warned that, "we do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us." Technologies of both centuries were imagined to unite to unite a vast and dispersed nation and edify citizens, but they also were suspected of trivializing daily affairs, weakening local bonds, and worse yet, exposing vulnerable children to threats and hindering their development into responsible adults.

These expressions are often a species of moral outrage known as media panic, a reaction of adults to the perceived dangers of an emerging culture popular with children, which the parental generation finds unfamiliar and threatening. Media panics recur in a dubious cycle of lathering outrage, with grownups seeming not to realize that the same excessive alarmism has arisen in every generation. Eighteenth and 19th-century novels might have caused confusion to young women about the difference between fantasy and reality, and excited their passions too much. In the 1950s, rock 'n roll was "the devil's music," feared for inspiring lust and youthful

rebellion, and encouraging racial mixing. Dime novels, comic books, and camera phones have all been objects of frenzied worry about “the kids these days.”

The popularity of video games in the '80s prompted educators, psychotherapists, local government officeholders, and media commentators to warn that young players were likely to suffer serious negative effects. The games would influence their aficionados in the all the wrong ways. They would harm children's eyes and might cause “Space Invaders Wrist” and other physical ailments. Like television, they would be addictive, like a drug. Games would inculcate violence and aggression in impressionable youngsters. Their players would do badly in school and become isolated and desensitized. A reader wrote to the *New York Times* to complain that video games were “cultivating a generation of mindless, ill-tempered adolescents.”

The arcades where many teenagers preferred to play video games were imagined as dens of vice, of illicit trade in drugs and sex. Kids who went to play *Tempest* or *Donkey Kong* might end up seduced by the lowlifes assumed to hang out in arcades, spiraling into lives of substance abuse, sexual depravity, and crime. Children hooked on video games might steal to feed their habit. Reports at the time claimed that video kids had vandalized cigarette machines, pocketing the quarters and leaving behind the nickels and dimes.

Nowhere was this more intense than in Mesquite, Texas, a suburb of Dallas where regulation of video arcades became a highly publicized legal affair. The city barred children under 17 from the local *Aladdin's Castle* emporium unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Officials also refused the arcade chain a license to open a new location in a shopping mall on the grounds that the owner was connected with “criminal elements.” Bally, which owned *Aladdin's Castle*, filed suit against Mesquite. The case made its way through the courts until 1982, when the Supreme Court sent the matter back to the

appellate court, effectively dodging an opportunity to establish young people's right to play video games in arcades. In a New York City case of the same year, a court ruled that the municipality could regulate games to curb noise and congestion, finding that games were not a form of protected speech under the First Amendment.

Such cases, among others, were not really about banning or restricting access to video games, however much some adults despised them. Millions of games were in people's homes by 1982, and no legal action could remove them. Rather, these efforts sought to regulate the behavior of America's teenagers, whose presence annoyed adults who objected to their hanging around, maybe skipping school, making fast remarks at passersby, maybe attracting the wrong element, making noise, littering, maybe drinking or smoking dope, and basically being teenagers. Some towns, like Marlborough, Mass, and Coral Gables, Fla., managed to keep arcade games out altogether, and others, like Morton Grove, Ill., managed to prevent arcade openings by enforcing ordinances that forbade businesses from operating more than a certain number of coin-operated machines.

There was a flipside to the freaking out about games and youth, a counterpoint to the panicked discourses that greeted the soaring popularity of the new amusements. Many commentators, particularly social scientists with a skeptical view of the moralizing, sky-is-falling crowd, saw great potential benefits in video games, which they identified as cutting-edge technology. Many observers of American society in the 1970s and 1980s had recognized a large-scale shift from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, from work in factories to work in offices, from manufacturing to knowledge and service labor. Among other technologies, electronics and particularly computers were facilitating this shift.

Video games were computerized playthings, often the first introduction to electronics and computers young people

received, and they could provide a new form of training in the tools of tomorrow's workplace, the optimists maintained. It was clear that children were learning from the games—how to master them, but also how to interact with digital electronics and computer interfaces. These were “powerful educational tools.” Some kids who were devoted to playing computer games might graduate to programming, making the pastime an introduction to making software. Several news items in the early '80s profiled kids who sold a video game they had programmed at home, thereby teaching themselves not just technical skills but entrepreneurialism. A California teenager named Tom McWilliams, whose parents refused to buy him a computer of his own, sold his game Outpost for \$60,000. An NBC News story on March 8, 1982, noted that now they call him “Tommy McMillions.”

Somehow, a generation of teenagers from the 1980s managed to grow up despite the dangers, real or imagined, from video games. The new technology could not have been as powerful as its detractors or its champions imagined. It's easy to be captivated by novelty, but it can force us to miss the cyclical nature of youth media obsessions. Every generation fastens onto something that its parents find strange, whether Elvis or Atari. In every moment in media history, intergenerational tension accompanies the emergence of new forms of culture and communication. Now we have sexting, cyberbullying, and smartphone addiction to panic about.

But while the gadgets keep changing, our ideas about youth and technology, and our concerns about young people's development in an uncertain and ever-changing modern world, endure.

Michael Z. Newman is an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His book, “Atari Age: The Emergence of Video Games in America” (MIT Press) was released in February.

Letter: Cloud seeding needs to be stopped

To the community,

To everyone that needs oxygen to live ... that is every single one of us and most all lifeforms. All of us have the right to clean, toxin free air and water as described in the Constitution as "the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

SMUD, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, put a notice out May 17 that says they plan a massive increase in cloud seeding without any environmental review. The meeting is June 1 at 6:30pm at Strawberry Lodge. The notice says they plan to treat 444 square miles of Desolation continuing across Highway 50 and over the headwaters of the only river that feeds Lake Tahoe, the Upper Truckee, and out to Kirkwood.

There are numerous water agencies with money to spend that have a target on the basin. All of the particulates fall out over the basin as carried by the prevailing wind out of the southwest and west, mostly. Their programs are poisoning both the east and western watersheds for their thirsty landscaping and buildings for the millions deplaning without housing in both California and Nevada.

Both states are long past the point of being able to handle any more people and that is one of the only reasons that we have government. To protect the resources that sustain all life. Unending sustainability has always been a contradiction in terms.

Where is (El Dorado County Supervisor) Sue N(ovasel) on this?

I called her office early last week for a response and have received no call back. What about the El Dorado, Placer, Washoe, Douglas, Alpine and Amador counties boards of supervisors?

Where is TRPA? Where is the city? How about the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club? How about the SLT realty board? Are they "Love Canaling" our properties?

The endless list of toxins that have been proven to be sprayed on us daily have resulted in undeniable decimation of our natural environment. The airplane noise is everywhere now, even deep in the wilderness. It is undeniable for anyone with eyes and ears. Silver iodide and the 10 other faux names it goes under, is harmful to aquatic life, should never end up in a water system and causes numerous ill effects in humans and all life. It has made me terribly sick with a cough that won't quit for two winters as well as many other symptoms. The sky terrorists have practiced on us long enough.

Barton – time to expose your respiratory related treatments and admissions and oxygen saturation rates. How many people are on CPAP machines and hauling around oxygen? How many residents are getting home oxygen delivery? What is the percentage oxygen in our air? (Not near what it should be). One thing is certain. You can't detect what no one is testing for.

If any attorney is reading this, we need a cease and desist order for SMUD and any other agency that is toxifying our environment and our bodies.

Now connect these dots. City of SLT removed all noise monitoring from the airport. Notice in Friday print paper says city will make all kinds of changes at the airport for current and future aviation needs. No environmental review. No information on what the future aviation needs are. I am guessing they are in bed with the weather modification corps

and interests and intend to use the airport for these harmful, noisy and unlawful spraying activities – for money of course. Time for answers. Please be at the meeting and submit your comments.

Linda Witters, Upper Lake Valley resident of 38 years

Opinion: Expanding Memorial Day's definition

By Kathryn Reed

Someone is missing. That's what Memorial Day is all about; remembering those in the military who have died.

This year I'm broadening the definition of Memorial Day. I'm mourning the loss of my 32-year-old cousin who died last month, and whose services will be in June.

She was an alcoholic.



Christina Reed

No one knew this until it was too late. She was admitted to a Denver hospital on a Tuesday and died that Friday. It was in that brief time that the truth, or at least a small amount of it, spilled forth.

Answers to so many questions are buried with her. So many whys. Why did she start drinking? – Was it her mom's death nearly five years ago? Why didn't she tell anyone about her pain? – Did she feel embarrassed? Why didn't she ask for help? – Or did she and no one heard her? Why wasn't her life enough to make her happy? Why? Why? Why?

From what I have learned in these few weeks, she had to have been drinking an incredible amount of liquor. It may have started a handful of years ago, maybe it was going on in college.

Christina was so bright and funny; she graduated from Wellesley College, was an attorney for the Bureau of Land Management, a beautiful skier who gracefully schussed down even the most difficult runs at Vail Mountain.

She was loved. Her dad, cousins, aunt and uncle all lived nearby. She had a cadre of friends at work and throughout the country.

No one, though, knew about what turned out to be a lethal secret.

She was a functioning alcoholic. But at the same Christina created a web of lies that only now are starting to unravel. It proves that even those who seem to have their lives together are fighting demons we don't know about.

I last saw Christina in January 2011. I had the opportunity to ski with her at Vail, to spend some time getting to know my youngest cousin just a tiny bit. We were never close; age and distance were the big obstacles. But she was family and we had a bond that even in death cannot be broken.

I ache mostly for my relatives in Denver who are left sorting through the fragments for answers that may never come. The “what ifs?” that linger; that eat away at you, making you believe you could have saved this troubled soul.

Life isn't easy – for anyone. Perhaps a death like Christina's is a reminder to really check in with people who mean something to you. Don't let canceled get-togethers become the norm without real probing; don't let questionable answers about health issues be easily dismissed; check in on the person where they live; stop the judgment as much as possible; and start listening – sometimes all it takes is being in a safe place to open up. But also know you can't always solve someone else's problems – and that is what can be so painful.

Letter: Maloff donation benefits women's fund

To the community,

Ms. Lisa Maloff continues to impact the South Shore in a remarkable way. On May 18, Ms. Maloff gave a remarkable gift to the Tahoe Women's Community Fund. During the spring gala, which focused on the theme of impact, Ms. Maloff was able to experience the loving warmth in the room after her surprise gift of \$100,000 was announced.

The standing ovation that she received was only a small symbol of the gratitude that was felt by the membership. The night was filled with immense hope for the future of South Lake Tahoe. During the night, Ms. Maloff shared with me that she received her BA in education and that Mr. Maloff had his master's in social work. These educational pathways are

evident in their giving and as residents of South Lake Tahoe; we are immensely grateful.

Ms. Maloff has changed this organization forever. Her gift will allow the members to vote and grant more than ever before. The growth and success of the Tahoe Women's Community Fund, in just two short years, is unprecedented. To date, the Tahoe Women's Community Fund has awarded \$51,000 to South Shore nonprofits. As the first collective giving fund in South Lake Tahoe, we are eager to see what the future holds.

Ms. Maloff, thank you for believing in the Tahoe Women Community Fund's mission. We couldn't be more proud to stand by you in making the South Shore better than ever.

Sara Pierce and the TWCF cabinet

Opinion: Skiers need to take action on national level

To the community,

I am proud to share that Squaw Valley-Alpine Meadows recently received the *Ski* magazine Golden Eagle Award in the large resort category for our multifaceted approach to sustainability and utilization of our network to promote climate change solutions. This is a tremendous honor bestowed by the National Ski Area Association. Our work in the environmental domain will continue for as long as we ski and ride these beautiful mountains, which is why I am reaching out for your support:



Andy Wirth

Together, we are a community of outdoor enthusiasts that is based on a love of our mountains, and I feel it is our duty to speak up and advocate for the continuous protection of our environment. President Trump and other leaders of our country are considering the exit from a commitment we made to the globe in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Mr. Trump, who vowed during his campaign to eradicate President Barack Obama's policies related to climate change, plans to sign an executive order directing Scott Pruitt, the new EPA administrator, to begin the legal process of undoing Mr. Obama's regulations surrounding the reduction of greenhouse pollution generated from coal-fired power plants. These regulations are the cornerstone of the Obama administration's program that supports our nation's compliance with the obligations we have in our commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.

With undeniable evidence that global temperatures are currently on the rise, we have a duty to the environment to participate in positive climate action. As skiers and riders, we rely on Mother Nature to provide us with snow, and we must protect our outdoors for the use of future generations of enthusiasts.

We stand with our partner Protect our Winters in imploring the EPA to maintain and even increase the critical regulations that combat climate change. I encourage you to do the same: Speak up, use your voice and help us advocate for the environment and stand by the commitment we, as a nation, made

to the globe by participating in the Paris Climate Agreement. To act, use the **Protect Our Winters Climate Activist's Roadmap** to submit your comments to the EPA.

Andy Wirth, president and CEO Squaw Valley Ski Holdings

Opinion: Rampant fiscal irresponsibility

By Larry Weitzman

“Bullet train Brown” has a brilliant idea recently reported on by Bay Area reporter Daniel Borenstein. It’s Brown’s idea that we borrow money from ourselves. That’s right, take \$6 billion out of the state’s bank accounts and replace it with a low interest note, say 1.3 percent and then give the \$6 billion cash to CalPERS which hopefully would return investment earnings of 7.5 percent or even 6.2 percent and the state would make hundreds of millions in what gamblers call the “vig” or vigorish which is the bookie’s 10 percent cut of every bet made, no matter who wins.

In more sophisticated investment circles other than a bookie’s, it is called hypothecation, where you borrow by pledging assets at a low rate to invest at a higher rate. Your profit is akin to the “vig.” That is exactly what happened with the real estate debacle of 2008 with the leveraging of mortgage backed securities and credit default swaps. The city of Oakland tried borrowing and reinvesting and lost hundreds of millions of dollars.



Larry Weitzman

But now it's "Bullet train Brown" who wants to roll the dice or try the red or the black. The problem is that he will come up with "00." Maybe we should call him "Bullet Brained Brown?" And this all has to do with our failing state and local pensions where there are hundreds of billions in unfunded liability because of CalPERS to either earn the money it said it would and/or optimistic projections of future earnings, sometimes called the discount rate which has finally been nominally lowered from 7.5 to 7 percent (still thought to be too optimistic by CalPERS own consultants who have mentioned 6.2 percent).

Pension issues are going to have a huge negative effect on El Dorado County. Our CAO, Don Ashton, referred to the problem recently in regards to the challenges the county faces, especially in light of the growing salary and benefit (read pension) issues.

Ashton cited two of the major problems, roads and pensions. With respect to roads he said money from the new state gasoline tax should average about \$6.9 million, which will still leave a shortfall of as much as \$3 million annually. But what he didn't mention was that EDC residents will pay about three times that amount as a result of the new gasoline taxes or about \$21 million just to get the \$6.9 million. If EDC were to recover the entire \$21 million, our fiscal problems would be almost alleviated. As to the other \$14.1 million difference, see "Bullet train Brown" above.

However, when roads are compared to the pension shortfall, it

becomes the mole hill compared to Everest. At the last board meeting, item 25 was a presentation by the consulting group Bartel who laid out to the board the monster with the most voracious appetite ever created, CalPERS. Thank you, Gray Davis.

Even according to Bartel, the problem is beyond daunting. My column from November 2016 said that our pension obligation will add \$63 million to our pension contributions over the next six years at current employment and salary levels with a possibility of that \$63 million number reaching \$100 million.

Bartel said that over the next five years our percentage of contributions for public safety could rise to 50 percent of salary paid and as much as 25 percent for miscellaneous employees meaning an increase for each of about 25 percent for each category. On top of that, our unfunded liability portion of EDC's pension obligation continues to expand. The unfunded portion was already at \$282 million in June 2015. Bartel shows that number to be \$349 million in June 2016 and projects the growth of this massive liability at about \$366 million by June 2017.

This issue is not new by any means. Our county auditor-controller sent a letter on Nov. 29, 2005, to the board that our unfunded CalPERS liability totaled \$64 million, a \$10 million increase from the prior year and our unfunded retirees' health care totaled \$36 million. On Feb. 15, 2012, our county auditor wrote the board that as of June 30, 2010, EDC's unfunded pension liability was now \$244 million. At that time, the auditor-controller warned that we need a two-tiered retirement system and more as these amounts are "unaffordable and insurmountable unfunded obligations."

The underlying reason for the falling discount rate and lowering rate of return for CalPERS is the growth of the national debt from \$10 trillion in 2008 to \$20 trillion by the end of 2016. Because we pay rent for the use of that money

called interest, a 1 percent rise in interest rates would cost taxpayers \$200 billion annually, it is unlikely that interest rates will rise precipitously in the near future. And the rest of the world governments are deeply in debt as well, so there is great pressure to keep interest rates artificially low to keep the cost of the debt low. There is no free lunch. In fact, for seniors who live on interest bearing investments, this situation is raising the cost of their lunches as their income dwindles.

The results of these artificially low interest rates are creating tremendous pressure on governments paying for the pensions they promised. I don't mean to scare our wonderful residents, especially our seniors of which I am one, but services in El Dorado County may eventually get limited to public safety and roads. There will be no money for senior programs and certainly less for public health. Libraries will be on line and counter service will be a thing of the past.

But there are other solutions. First, a complete reform of the pension system. Vesting rules will need to change and the benefits promised need to be lowered. Employee contributions will have to increase or perhaps public pensions will have to be combined with social security which might be a good thing as it will add more contributors to the system (more current workers per retiree).

The bottom line is that public servants in general are overpaid for the "public service" provided. However, there are a few categories of underpay, but not many. It used to be that the private sector was the place to make money, but job security was less and performance was how you got ahead. Retirement was an individual proposition. Now the best jobs are in government where the earnings are good, the job security is almost a guarantee and the pensions are phenomenal. Public servants now covet and own the public trough. The world has become upside down. Righting it might be an impossible task.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.