

Letter: EDC Republicans on opposite side of supes

To the community,

The El Dorado County Republican Central Committee wholeheartedly opposes Assembly Bill 1 and Senate Bill 1, which, if passed, would raise gasoline taxes by 12 cents a gallon and diesel, taxes by 20 cents a gallon.

The two bills, both proposed by Democrat legislators, would also raise vehicle registrations by at least \$38 per year.

We also completely oppose the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors unanimous vote to send letters of support to Democrat [state] Sen. [Jim] Beall and Democrat Assemblyman [Jm] Fraizer in support of their efforts to raise these taxes. In their recent letter of support passed on Jan. 24 the EDC Board of Supervisors stated that these proposed taxes were part of a plan to refine "Republican ideas on revenues and reforms". To be clear, raising taxes, especially in this drastic fashion, are not in line with any Republican principles. To the contrary, the Republican Party believes economic growth will only come through lowering taxes and eliminating unnecessary regulations.

On behalf of hardworking local families the EDC Republican Central Committee respectfully asks that the EDC Board of Supervisors rescind their recent support of Assembly Bill 1 and Senate Bill 1. These bills particularly harm rural counties, like El Dorado, the most because our residents have to drive more miles compared to that of a typical urban California family.

We look forward to working with our county's Board of Supervisors to find real solutions to our local and state transportation needs.

Sincerely,

Todd White, chairman El Dorado County Republican Central Committee

Opinion: Donald Trump is living in my closet

By Joe Mathews

I have a confession to make: Donald Trump is imprisoned in my closet.

He's been in there for months, and I haven't dared to let him out, for fear that his presence might be discovered. What's worse, my treatment of Trump does not conform with the Geneva Convention. He's spent all this time in a tiny, dark space, without proper ventilation. I haven't even provided food or water.



Joe Mathews

I'm not a kidnapper or torturer, I swear. My only defense is puzzlement: Like most people in California, I badly want to get rid of Donald Trump, but I can't figure out how.

To be clear: My Donald Trump looks a lot like the one who is

assuming the presidency of the United States. My Trump also hasn't released any tax returns. But my Trump is not that Trump.

How do I know? Well, the Trump in my closet has never insulted Mexicans, threatened to ban Muslims from the country, boasted about assaulting women, or cozied up to Vladimir Putin.

My Trump is a piñata. He is about half the size of the human Trump. Unfortunately, he has become, like President Trump, inescapable.

I never thought my Trump would hang around this long. I bought him online in 2015—as a gift. A journalist friend in Sweden was celebrating his 50th birthday. I thought a Trump piñata might offer an opportunity for amusing intercultural exchange. So I paid to have Trump shipped direct.

But borders are always fraught in matters Trump. Swedish officials, for reasons I don't understand, wouldn't let him into their country, deporting him back to me in Southern California. Trump sat in a box among kids' toys until the kids opened the box and started asking questions about his lack of private parts.

So, early in 2016, I relocated Trump to the closet, laying him on his back on the top shelf. I figured, like other Americans, that the non-piñata Trump wouldn't last. But as he kept winning primaries, I felt unsettled about having an unhinged white nationalist in the closet.

I tried to get rid of him. I offered him to friends, and friends of friends. No one would take him. My Trump experienced bipartisan rejection—more liberally minded people didn't want to be near the piñata. And more conservative minded people didn't want any association that would force them to explain why they might support or oppose him.

Desperate, I tried to repurpose Trump. Noisy birds had taken

up residency in our yard, so I attached him to our grapefruit tree—my very own Trumpian scarecrow. Unfortunately, he scared the neighbors more than the birds. One asked me how I could be a Trump supporter. Another asked me if my suspending Trump from the tree was a form of lynching.

Trump went back in the closet. But I didn't give up. After his frightening convention speech, I put him out with the trash. But Trump was too large to fit entirely in one trash can, and the company that handles our city's trash won't pick up oversize items. I considered setting him on fire in the driveway, but would I be in violation of Southern California's strict air quality regulations?

After his upset victory in November, I redoubled my resolve to dispatch him once and for all. I asked my family if we could seize the opportunity of a December birthday party to let the piñata fulfill its intended destiny. But my wife, who stays out of politics, didn't think it was a good idea. My 8-year-old informed me he was already sick of seeing and hearing Trump all the time.

So today Trump remains in my closet. And I remain stuck, in the same way California is with President Trump.

We can't support him—more than two thirds of Californians voted against him. But we can't really fight him at every single turn—he's the federal government and we still need our Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and military.

There is, of course, the lingering temptation to stuff him full of candy and beat him with a stick until he breaks into pieces. But maybe we can't even do that anymore. Now that he's president, would someone call the cops or the Secret Service?

In recent days, I've decided I was devoting too much energy to the future of my Trump. So I'm keeping him in my closet for the foreseeable future. I won't ever be comfortable with him, but the two of us can coexist. At least the piñata version of

our president hasn't told me any lies.

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

Letter: EDC snow removal leaves sour taste

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to El Dorado County and Lake Tahoe News.*

To the community,

While the storms have been relentless and I understand the many needs you have to address, there is no excuse for poor practices while doing the job of plowing.

We live on Wailaki Street in Tahoe Par 60. Last week I called to report of a driver not lowering the gate on the blade when hitting driveways. A number of driveways were left with a 3-foot berm. Our neighbor is a director in the Planning Department for the city of South Lake Tahoe and had come home for lunch and completely cleared his driveway. As his wife came home shortly after, she found the large berm in front of the just cleared driveway and she got high-centered on it. It left her car halfway in the road. It took a number of neighbors to push her car into the driveway and a nice job undone for them.

While I got a return call from the county Transportation Division, I had just boarded a plane for a trip and referred the lady that called to please talk to my wife and I gave her the number. My wife never received a call.

The word must have gotten out because in the latest pass through our neighborhood, the driver had lowered the gate for other driveways, except for ours. My son had just worked so hard to keep the area clear of snow and the plow driver undid all that work in mere seconds. We have my wife's elderly mother living with us and we need to have access in case of any medical emergency. This sort of retaliation by your employees is not to be tolerated.

My son took pictures of the driveways to show comparison of those cleared yet ours was buried. I will provide them if you need further proof.

We can appreciate the scale of the work in this series of storms, but good practices during the execution of that work goes a long way when trying to gain public support.

Jeffrey L. Spencer, executive director Sacramento Transportation Authority

Letter: Vet lashes out at American Legion

To the community,

My letter to the editor is provided to all of my friends and neighbors in the area asking for advice and assistance. This is my true story.

My name is Mike Williams, I graduated from El Dorado High in Placerville in 1971. I was drafted to serve my country in the heat of the Vietnam War at 18. I would have never thought that at the age of 19 I was taking arms and legs off our service

men and women. I was stationed at Balboa Naval Medical Center as a corpsman. I know that I have held the hands of over 300 soldiers who never made it. I hope no one has to go through what I had to and see what I've seen.

Sorry about my grammar and storytelling; this is my first time at this, and I'm upset as I'm writing this letter to all of you. Forgive me.

To the point I was a homeless veteran a few years ago in the streets of Sac. I got beat up under the rose garden outside the state Capitol. I should have died from my street beatings, and the cold wet rain but thank God it's all over and today I'm safe and have a place to live. I'm a changed man forever and have a heart to really help our veterans so I decided to form a business to help and employ our veterans. Today I'm CEO of a company called Veteran's Pride Foods. The reason for my company is to help veterans by giving them a job working at my Hot & Sausage cart located across from Poor Reds at George's Pit Stop in El Dorado. Please drop by and see me during lunch time. I'm there from 11:30 to 3:30.

As a past homeless veteran, I'm always looking to help veteran groups in need and looking for veterans to employ. After reading about the nations largest veterans support group in town, the American Legion 119, I became a member. The reason I joined was to ask for their support in my efforts to help our veterans and wanted to tell them my story and to make a presentation to the board to assist in a fundraiser and event at their hall. The event was to raise money to support the American legion 119 and to support and employ our veterans.

I arrived one hour early to look around and also meet other veteran members and introduce myself.

I had no idea there would be a full active bar and that most all of the board members were drinking and getting drunk before the board meeting, but I went with the flow and gave my request and presentation for approval anyway. During this time

I found it very strange that no one asked a question and no one seemed to care. Why? I was disrespected and shamed!

After the meeting and as I was walking out the door I asked a fellow veteran is this the way business is done in the American Legion? He told me to not make waves and just go with the flow and I'm sure they will get back to you soon. Nice guy, he thanked me for becoming a new member. So I left expecting a reply very soon.

Three weeks latter I finally got a call from a member of the board stating that the board voted no to allowing me to use the hall and that they didn't want to support me or my company's efforts to employ and help our local veterans. I asked him why. He told me that they didn't want me to use their kitchen. I said what? I told him that I never asked to use their kitchen and told the board that I'm catering the lunch from our own commercial kitchen. He knew that as did all the other board members. I was so upset so I told him that I wanted to see the minuets and try to get a straight answer. I was told to forget it and move on, don't make waves. Today I still don't have the board minutes and I don't like being treated like I'm some idiot. I'm the reason they exist. Read their website.

I'm not going to take this lying down and I'm not going to forget it and go away. I don't care what they say. Did all of you know that the American Legion raises millions in donations to help veterans and homeless veterans just like me? ... and pay no taxes!

The American Legion 119 is a scam and run by a bunch of drunks. I'm asking all of you to never give money to support their scam bar and lie and never support the American Legion 119 in any efforts to raise money stating that they are in business to support our veterans. They are not!

Join me in exposing this veteran club bar asking for money to

help our veterans and then drink it away. Let's expose them for what they are. I want to audit them and I bet you that they have never taken a veteran off the streets.

Who am I? Just a poor past homeless veteran trying to help our veterans. Shame on me. I bet I have paid more in taxes than they have to helped more veterans. Did you know that the veteran suicide rate has increased 32 percent in 2016 and 30 or more veterans kill themselves everyday?

Bless all of you who took the time to read my letter. God bless America and our veterans. I can use some help to fight these scammers. Got any ideas? I would really like to sue them for what they are doing and what they have done to me.

Thank you,

Mike Williams, Cameron Park

Letter: Lauding the women's march

To the community,

One million thanks to all of you who made the Bi-State Women's March Lake Tahoe a huge success.

It was a very special event for our community thanks to all the media coverage, the special care provided by the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, the cooperation of Caltrans, the dynamic organizational committee and more than 530 hardy people who came out to participate during a snowstorm.

It was a sight to behold.

Sincerely,

Vicki Raucci Gonzales, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Civic duty involves clearing fire hydrants

By Bill Seline

Structure fires occur at the highest rates during the winter months. These house fires are usually caused by heating appliances like space heaters and woodstoves, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

When the fire department responds to put out a house fire, the fire engine carries about 500 gallons of water, enough water to make an initial fire attack, but they quickly need a continuous water supply from a fire hydrant to extinguish the fire.



Bill Seline

Finding and connecting to a fire hydrant is one of the firefighters' first priorities. New mapping technology on fire engines has improved our ability to find hydrant locations more quickly, but getting to them when they are buried under heavy snow can be a challenge.

As you may have noticed, the recent storms have buried many of the over 4,000 fire hydrants in the Truckee Fire Protection District, as well as thousands of others in our sister districts across the Truckee-Tahoe region.

Fire crews have been working to clear snow from some of the priority hydrants on main roads, but it is impossible and not practical to clear snow from every hydrant after every storm.

In the event of a fire in your neighborhood, firefighters may spend valuable time searching for and digging out a hydrant when they could be doing other important tasks.

This is where you can help. Some citizens have informally “adopted a hydrant” in their neighborhood and take responsibility to clear snow three feet in all directions from the hydrant, as well as keeping it visible from the street. This is a great way to give back to your community and neighborhood.

I encourage you to find the fire hydrant near your house and clear the snow away after storms. This will improve the chances that the fire department can knock down a fire as quickly as possible.

Bill Seline is chief of the Truckee Fire Protection District.

Opinion: EDC supes OK questionable tax hike

By Larry Weitzman

Without one word of discussion, not one word, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted in the morning session of

their Jan. 24 meeting to send a letter of support to substantially raise the taxes of every motorist of El Dorado County.



Larry Weitzman

Late Friday afternoon before the BOS meeting an addendum was placed on the consent calendar, item 38. The addendum said, "Chief Administrative Office recommending the board authorize the chair to sign the attached letters of support to Sen. Jim Beall and Assemblyman Jim Frazier, supporting SB1 and AB1 which would provide approximately \$10.1 million in additional funding for street and road maintenance to El Dorado County."

The use of the consent agenda is to quickly and summarily approve an agenda item without any discussion from BOS members or the public.

SB1 and AB1 will increase the gasoline tax by 12 cents a gallon (a 40 percent increase), diesel fuel by 20 cents and the vehicle registration fee by \$38 for conventional and hybrids cars and by \$100 for electric cars. Legislative analysts of the bill say it will raise \$7 billion and create a new bureaucracy. That new tax averages out to \$180 for every man, woman and child within the state. For El Dorado County that amounts to a cost of \$21 million or about double the amount of money the CAO says we will receive from this new tax.

If your family has two cars and you drive a total of 40,000 miles a year at 20 mpg the tax will cost that family \$240 extra in gas expense and a \$76 increase in vehicle registration

fees. Most drivers with pickups will fare worse.

Instead of cutting meaningful EDC spending, the BOS has decided to support a significant raise of your taxes that everyone will get to directly pay.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: Kiwanis take a turn at Bread & Broth

To the community,

It is always a treat when the Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra hosts a Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment. Not only has the Kiwanis Club sponsored an Adopt A Day every January since the program's inception in 2010, but they were the first organization to host an AAD dinner when the program was introduced.

Bread & Broth is so fortunate to have the on-going support of the dedicated Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra.

On Jan. 9, Kelly Meyer joined her fellow Kiwanis Club and seasoned AAD volunteer crew members Rich Dart, Pat Frega and Jan Lynds in providing help at the club's AAD dinner.

"This experience and opportunity to give back to the community I was born and raised in is incredible," Meyer said. "It's an eye opening experience and one I will be grateful for as it sticks with me – the dinner guest's strength, gratitude and tenacity. Sitting and talking with some of them was an honor and serving them was all my pleasure. I was blessed to be amongst my fellow Kiwanians."

Each Kiwanis Club is dedicated to improving the world one child, one person at a time. Bread & Broth would like to thank the Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra for partnering with our program in our mutual goal of helping the neediest member of our community.

For more B&B program information, go **online**.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Can a rocket scientist straighten out EDC?

By Larry Weitzman

For the past five or so years El Dorado County government has been out of control and the buck stops with the elected Board of Supervisors, the only county governing body which is answerable to the people. While it started before the Supervisor Brian Veerkamp regime, because of a politician's desire to be loved by everyone and not knowing how to say no, the downhill rolling boulder (of county government) has appeared to have gathered momentum from the debris that has attached itself to it.

It started gathering momentum in 2013, after then CAO Terri Daly had put in place the first part of her team, the incompetent Kim Kerr. Kerr had left a trail of destruction just prior as city manager of Ione. Kerr got a huge raise too. Kerr couldn't even properly and legally transfer a property tax base from Latrobe to El Dorado Hills Fire. She even had trouble buying snowplows, but she was a friend of Daly's so it's OK. The Veerkamp regime did nothing.



Larry Weitzman

A new contract for miscellaneous employees was in negotiation (that's a euphemism for give away the farm) in the latter half of 2013. The union asked for a three-year contract with raises of 3 percent a year and would probably have settled for 2 percent, but Daly offered them 5 percent annually over three years. Maybe it was because there was a \$54 million cash balance on June 30, 2013, but the union of course took the 15 percent deal.

It was a tens of million-dollar giveaway of taxpayer money. The Veerkamp regime approved the raise, especially Norma Santiago, who said on Daly's none too soon departure, "Daly was a champion for EDC employees." Santiago left out the residents and taxpayers of EDC.

While the Veerkamp regime looked on, Daly hired more incompetents (one of the rules of government bureaucrats is always hire your friends first. It gives you built in loyalty and yes people to support you). She did that with Kerr, Kelly Webb and Pam Knorr attempting to give them all huge raises. In the Webb case, she was appointed interim IT director. After she messed up the county IT billing costing the county millions of dollars, Webb was awarded step increases, permanent IT directorship and Daly tried to get her an illegal retroactive pay bump. The Veerkamp regime said yes to the all of this including the retroactive and the other raises. But Webb didn't meet the minimum qualifications and raises were not paid by the auditor because the BOS acted unconstitutionally. Webb shortly retired with a huge six figure pension and benefits. Webb's total compensation for

years 2013 and 2014 during this nepotism exceeded \$200,000 per year.

Knorr, who had no prior human resource experience and who separated from her prior employment under questionable circumstances, got hired in at a \$30,000 annual salary increase over the then current highest salary ever paid to an HR director in EDC. The Veerkamp regime approved it. The hiring was done with a five-day recruitment, the shortest possible time allowed by EDC policy. The Veerkamp regime approved it along with the \$30,000 raise, plus attendant benefits. Never mind never questioning her about all her aliases she used in the past and her claims against her prior employer. Background checks before and after Knorr was more like a chroma key screen, it was anything you like. While at Alpine County, she claimed her doctor told her that the Alpine BOS should not talk to her and ended up receiving a huge settlement payout, bordering on extortion. And the Veerkamp regime of the BOS hired her. They really vetted that one.

It was Knorr who recommended Larry Combs. The Veerkamp regime hired him too. Combs went on to hire his friends from Sutter County, our recently hired ACAO, Corley (who earns \$182,000 plus benefits) and the new risk manager, Marco Sandoval, who earns well into six figures. All this under the nose of the Veerkamp regime.

The following is an excerpt from the Sept. 14, 2015, BOS meeting of the Veerkamp regime at about 2:55pm:

Supervisor Ron Mikulaco: *"CAO, so I know that we met back through draft budget hearings. There was a challenge with being structurally balanced. With what you mentioned, are we going to be able to come out of this structurally balanced?"*

CAO Larry Combs: *"We are structurally balanced. The El Dorado budget is, in my opinion, in good financial shape."*

Mik: *"As we absorb the last of the third pay raise, are we*

going to be able to maintain a structural balance?"

Combs: *"In my opinion, yeah."*

Nothing could have been further from the truth. There was plenty of local writings and warnings by the county auditor that considering the growing pension and health cost issues, the new sheriff's facility and crumbling roads of which Combs took road maintenance out of the budget, EDC was heading into an abyss. Combs knew the cliff was near, but the Veerkamp regime didn't want to hear the bad news. The Veerkamp regime didn't properly vet Combs either. Guess who recommend Combs? Knorr.

Our CDA approved a development deal in EDH a few months ago, writing to the Veerkamp regime that the "development agreement" was still valid. It wasn't because it expired. No one in CDA caught this. Did anyone lose their job? Of course not, and if they did it would be government musical chairs played with an extra chair.

Elected to the BOS and taking his seat on Jan. 3 was a new District One Supervisor John Hidahl. His resume says he was a rocket scientist, an engineer who worked on propulsion systems for Aerojet who designs and builds rocket motors and he also worked for (Northrop) Grumman, an aircraft design firm with a storied and fabulous reputation. They were and are responsible for the F-14 Tomcat (Top Gun), the B-2 bomber and soon to be B-21 Raider. Grumman, because their aircraft were built so strong and rugged were called the "Grumman Iron Works."

Hidahl appears to be very intelligent. Will he require the same kind of quality control that the lives of so many of our Navy and Air Force pilots relied on including the pilots and astronauts who flew the Space Shuttle powered by Aerojet/Rocketdyne rocket motors? What goes on in EDC government wasn't allowed at his former employers. Is he going to demand the excellence of his former employers or get in

lock step with the Veerkamp regime of abject mediocrity?

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: Proud of SLT's women's march

To the community,

I am so proud to have been part of the Bi-State Women's March on Saturday. And I am proud that Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe sanctioned the opportunity for 500 women, men and children to march, not as a protest, but in unison to affirm that "women's rights are human rights".

This march was a very peaceful demonstration, starting out with a few hundred participants gathered at the Hard Rock, proceeding down the walkway to the California line where the walkers morphed into a single traffic lane. And thanks to South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler's support and the awareness of we mountain people the 2 1/2-mile procession was orderly and very responsive to the encouragement of passing autos and their occupants.

But then, at the beginning and all along the march route, people crossed the highway from motels and shopping venues to join in; others jumped out of cars to march along and other participants waiting at various locales joined in ... and we had 500 women, men and children feeling not a chill but the warmth of the moment.

The snow? It only added to the moment!

And kudos to all the women whose commitment to human rights

brought this march to life.

Del Laine, South Lake Tahoe