

Nev. nonpartisan voters growing in importance

By Megan Messerly, Las Vegas Sun

Going into the Nevada caucuses, 49-year-old Catana Barnes wanted to help Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders win the state.

But that's not what happened.

The Sanders campaign and the state's Democratic Party had spent weeks reminding nonpartisan voters, like Barnes, that they could register to vote as Democrats in order to participate in the state's closed Democratic caucuses on Feb. 20. They could even show up on caucus day and register to vote.

In Nevada, one in five voters identifies as nonpartisan. With third-party voters added in, that number jumps to one in four Nevadans who do not identify with one of the major two political parties. They're a critical segment of the voting population – they can be the make-or-break group in the general election – but due to the state's closed caucus and closed primary systems, don't participate in deciding who makes it to the November ballot.

Read the whole story

West Slope bank robber on the loose



This man is wanted in connection with the March 21 bank robbery in Georgetown.

A bank robber got away with an undisclosed amount of cash on Monday at the El Dorado Savings Bank in Georgetown.

The suspect was armed with a black pistol. He entered the West Slope bank March 21 at 12:49pm and demanded money.

He is described as a white male adult, wearing a San Francisco 49ers ball cap, blue rain coat, blue jeans, black sunglasses and a white dust mask over part of his face.

He was seen leaving in a red Dodge Durango.

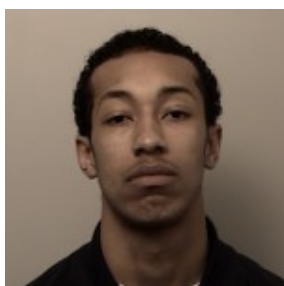
Anyone with information is asked to call 530.621.6600. The suspect is considered armed and dangerous.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

SLT murder suspects plead not guilty



Tristan Batten



Harvest
Davidson

Two men accused of gunning down a man in South Lake Tahoe in January pleaded not guilty to murder on March 21.

Tristan Batten, 18, and Harvest Davidson, 20, are charged with the shooting death of Dennis Wright Jr., 40, of Amador County. Wright died at Barton Memorial Hospital on Jan. 30 not long after being shot multiple times at the Beverly Lodge.

Two other suspects in the case remain at large. Domenic Seanlee Randolph, 24, and Dion Jermaine Randolph Vaccaro, 26, are considered armed and dangerous, according to the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office. Detectives said they most

recently have lived in the Fairfield, Vallejo, Napa and Sacramento areas. Those are the same locations where Batten and Davidson hail from.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

South Shore businesses divulge what they need

South Shore businesses need employees with basic math and critical thinking skills, better customer service training, and knowledge of technology and computers. Employers have a hard time with reliability, punctuality, and steady work force.

Those were some of the outcomes from a two-day Q&A volunteers had with area businesses last week.

Businesses said a younger work force is drawn to Tahoe for its proximity to snow and adventure rather than career building and development.

The walk was coordinated by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. Three hundred businesses from Meyers to Round Hill were contacted.

The businesses that have had success with employment recruitment and retention said they've been able to study the millennial work force and change their efforts to better recruit the incoming generation and retain them by offering a positive work culture, incentives, and flexibility. Most interviewees said business has been good, as the snow has brought in the necessary tourism numbers to meet their bottom

lines. Many businesses even those not directly tied to tourism spoke to the importance of sustaining and growing tourism. However, some stated challenges they have with traffic congestion, limited parking, signage, and poor Internet in the basin.

Ideas for creating a stronger work force included offering trade programs at Lake Tahoe Community College, developing partnerships between businesses in a work-share program, creating a central job posting site, and training employers on millennial recruitment and retention.

The survey results will be compiled and shared in the coming months.

The **LTCC Adult Education Consortium** will use the data to begin planning courses and curriculum related to industry needs in the region.

Nev. lawmakers differ with their lawyers on transparency

By Michelle Rindels, AP

While the Nevada Legislature's lawyers are adamant that no lawmaker communications outside of final votes are public records available upon request, several lawmakers say the blackout is extreme and worth revisiting.

Their statements came after the Legislature's lawyers rejected a request from the Associated Press for a week of emails and appointment calendars for four legislative leaders. The Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau's 28-page denial contrasts with responses from some lawmakers in other states who turned over emails and calendars at AP's request.

"A blanket block on anything seems a little heavy-handed," said Republican Assemblyman David Gardner, who said he previously assumed emails through his legislative account would be subject to the public records law that compels local governments and state agencies to turn over similar documents. "We're public servants, and they have the right to know what we're doing."

The bureau's lawyers say the principles that keep private any communication before final votes are longstanding and aim to facilitate free and candid discussion about ideas before a final vote. A bill passed on the last day of the 2015 legislative session that made those principles law simply codified arguments that could be made through case law, bureau lawyer Kevin Powers said in an interview on the public affairs TV show "Ralston Live."

A number of lawmakers who include Sen. Aaron Ford, the top-ranking Democrat in the Nevada Senate and a subject of the records request, said they are wary of opening up the legislative process further.

"Every legislator ... receives constituent emails, some of which are very personal – very personal. They don't anticipate and expect that the media is going to get ahold of their personal, private issues," he said in an interview with KNPR radio.

Others are calling for repealing the law, saying the public should be able to see whether lawmakers are behaving and how they are using public resources. They include Democratic congressional candidate Susie Lee, whose primary opponents

include a legislator who voted for the bill and is subject to its protections, and Republican Assemblywoman Victoria Seaman.

Seaman was on the legislative operations committee that reviewed the bill on the last day of the session before it passed unanimously in the Senate and Assembly. She said she made a mistake in approving the policy without considering its potential harms.

"I think that if I knew it would be used to shield lawmakers from legislative inquiry, I never would have entrusted them with it," Seaman said.

The information in emails and calendars could help citizens understand who's bending the ear of lawmakers and could give insight into why bills lived and died. Sondra Cosgrove of the League of Women Voters Las Vegas Valley said that when she testifies on behalf of a bill, she'd like to know if lawmakers have already made up their minds before going into a meeting.

"I feel like the press and the voting public should be on an equal footing in being able to influence what's going on," she said.

Lawmakers are the only ones who can change their open-records policies. Several interviewed by AP seemed conflicted on how exactly to dial back the strong confidentiality rules.

"I would always lean toward being more open and explaining things," said Republican Majority Leader Paul Anderson, who at the same time gave the Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau credit for trying to protect the part-time lawmakers from embarrassing missteps and distracting disclosures.

Gardner said relaxing the laws too much could turn public-requests records into political weapons or could swamp the Legislature and its staff. But he said he was already researching how other state legislatures approach the issue to get ideas on how to tweak Nevada's law.

“If you ask people, they’d say it’s a problem,” he said of the lack of transparency. “The problem will be where is the balance?”

Incarcerated youth use drumming as therapy

Drumming has been a regular sound coming from inside the Juvenile Treatment Center in South Lake Tahoe.

Five youth have been participating in the eight-week Challenge Program that culminated recently with a performance before family and elected officials.

Using the traditional African Djembe drum as the vehicle for communication, the program combined the therapeutic potential of musical expression with a range of social learning outcomes including emotional control, improved relationships, and increased self-esteem.

Liz Broscoe, a local professional musician, is a certified facilitator of the program, and has been using the program, combined with other outcome-based techniques, to help at-risk youth. Not only did Broscoe guide the youth through drumming rhythms to build community and support within the group, the youth were also given assignments to reflect on the role they play in their own destiny.

The Drumbeat Program was made available from grant funding to the Juvenile Service Council from the American Century Championship and El Dorado Community Foundation/South Lake Tahoe Fund.

2 acts added to Harveys Concert Series

Two concerts have been added to the lineup at Harveys Outdoor Concert Series – Tim McGraw and Widespread Panic.

McGraw has played the Stateline venue multiple times; most recently in **2013**. He will be in town July 23 at 7:30pm. Tickets range from \$89.50 to \$179.50.

Widespread Panic will take the stage July 6 at 7:30pm. Tickets are \$49.50.

Hotel transformed from old Tahoe into new



The lobby is also known as the living room. Photo/Matt Bolt

By Kathryn Reed

Modern and minimalist intersect with high quality and relaxed at one of South Lake Tahoe's newest motels.

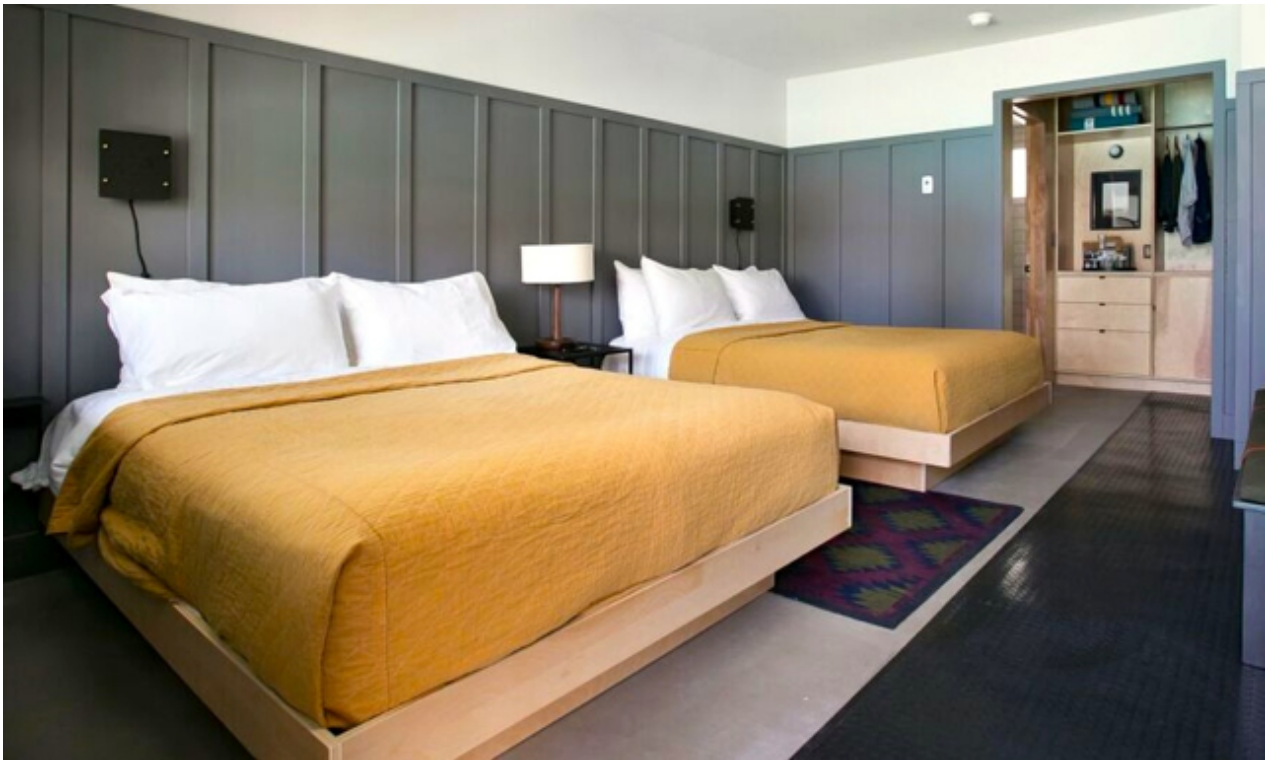
The Green Lantern is now the Coachman Hotel.

Justin Watzka has taken what was a rundown hotel in the Stateline area that looked like it hadn't been renovated since it opened in the 1960s and has turned it into a three-star hotel that is already attracting guests even though construction is not done.

Last weekend 15 rooms were rented. The grand opening is slated for June. To date 30 of the 42 rooms have been renovated. There are 15 layouts. Depending on the time of year, rooms are likely to run between \$125 and \$220 a night.

In the 1980s the Green Lantern and Royal Coachman became one hotel. Watzka in naming his venture kept some of that history. While the property has driveways on Pine Boulevard and

Manzanita Avenue, Pine is the main entrance.



Rooms at the Coachman Hotel come with king or queen beds.
Photo/Matt Bolt

Watzka bought the 1.1 acres last April for \$1.3 million. Since that time he infused “multiple millions” of dollars to transform the property.

“I want to do more projects in the future, so this has to last,” Watzka told Lake Tahoe News while on a tour of the site. He’s here for the long haul, not to just sell the hotel once it’s truly launched.

His background is in the lodging industry, having worked for Marriott Vacation Club for a number of years. He recently earned his MBA. In August, he moved to South Lake Tahoe full time.

Watzka has relied on his dad, Peter, for some expertise. The elder Watzka has spent his entire career in the hospitality business. Brother Garrett, who owns Duvin Design clothing company, has been tasked with creating apparel for the hotel

to sell to guests.

The guest experience is what Watzka is focused on. He believes 20- to 50-year-olds from the Bay Area and Sacramento will be his market. It will be people who like to play outdoors. Heavenly Mountain Resort and Lakeside Beach are within walking distance. So are the Stateline casinos.

The lobby, which also is a bit like a living room where guests can relax in a variety of seating areas while enjoying a coffee, beer or wine, is where a garage used to be. Baristas use Stumptown coffee from Portland. Beers go for \$5 – with Great Basin, Sierra Nevada, Kona and Stella available. The wines have not been selected yet, but Watzka wants them to come from innovative, young vintners.

Instead of a separate check-in area, it is combined with where people can purchase those hot and cold drinks.

The alder counter has been stained to look like it is walnut. Wood is a common theme throughout the property.

Adjacent to the lobby-living room is the breakfast area. A continental breakfast, including a waffle station, is complimentary.

Outside the shared space is a tiered seating area with large gas fire pits. On top of the lobby-living room is a roof deck that in nicer weather will have seating. The original pool will be overhauled and ready for summer. A new hot tub is already operational.

Concrete floors are throughout the property – even in the rooms. A rubber flooring is on top of this in the rooms, which is ideal for when people haul in their ski gear or sand from the beach.

Instead of closets, a bar is in the vanity area of the bathroom where clothes could be hung. There's also a rack for

skis that could double to hang wet jackets or swim suits.

The old hotel lobby, which had a manager's unit behind it, is now a spacious three-bedroom family unit that can sleep 11.



The fire pits are just outside the “living room” at the Coachman. Photo/Matt Bolt

Sierra Sustainable Builders is the general contractor. Workers essentially took the innards down to the studs. New electrical is throughout, with plenty of outlets for people's gadgets.

The bathrooms are small, but the showers are decent size. They are about the length of a bathtub – and there are no tubs. Shampoo, soap and conditioner are in bulk dispensers, which Watzka said allows for a higher quality product – Malin+Goetz – to be used.

A touch not often found even at high-end hotels is heated toilet seats.

That is all part of Watzka's desires to not be ordinary, have

little upgrades and still be affordable.

The rooms, some as small as 200-square-feet, are functional and cozy. Beds are either queens or kings. Apple TVs are in each room – another one of those upgrades Watzka wants to be known for.

“The guests’ comfort is No. 1,” Watzka said.

Opinion: Crusade for Calif. auto insurance reform

By Joe Rodriguez, Mercury News

Dan Karr’s new year began with sorrow, but the veteran Silicon Valley hand’s new mission in life as an auto-insurance reformer is moving along nicely – for a 21st-century Don Quixote.

“Tilting at windmills, hah!” he said over breakfast in downtown San Jose recently to talk about his new company, ValChoice.com. “It’s probably a good analogy for what I’m trying to do.”

Put simply: Karr wants consumers to know how well or badly the auto insurance company they sign up with will treat them, especially after accidents, and he’s trying to make a buck at it. After all, Karr is a software engineer and former high-tech executive in Silicon Valley, one of the few places where socially minded businesses don’t get laughed out of the board room.

Read the whole story

More doctors prescribing exercise instead of medication

By Rodrique Ngowi, AP

BOSTON – When Michelle Johnson scribbles out prescriptions, the next stop for many of her patients is the gym, not the pharmacy.

Doctors treating chronic health problems increasingly are prescribing exercise for their patients – and encouraging them to think of physical activity as their new medication.

In one such program run by a health center in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, primary care physicians, internists and psychologists prescribe access to a gym for \$10 a month, including free child care, classes and kids programs. Providing affordable gym access for patients ensures compliance, said Gibbs Saunders of Healthworks Community Fitness, a nonprofit gym in Dorchester that has partnered with several health care providers to help low-income residents fill their exercise prescriptions.

Executives at the Whittier Street Health Center say low-cost access to a gym is important, since many residents' income is low and 70 percent of those they treat suffer from chronic problems such as obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and depression.

Life expectancy in Roxbury is 59 years – well below the

national average of 78.8 years.

“Exercise is not a new medicine. It’s really an old medicine,” said Johnson, who prescribes exercise to patients at the Roxbury-based health center. “But you know, I think we’re now coming to the point of understanding how important it is.”

Monisha Long, who is morbidly obese and suffers from hypertension, got a doctor’s prescription for exercise and says she’s gotten visible and dramatic results after more than two years of regular workouts.

“I lost well over 150 pounds, and I’ve been keeping it off for the past couple of years,” she said after working out on an elliptical machine at Healthworks.

And Long cites other, less-visible benefits.

“I’m more energized,” she said. “As far as my energy, I feel like I’m stronger. I feel like I’m less tired. I feel like I can do almost anything now.”

People who are physically active tend to live longer and are at lower risk of heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, depression and some cancers, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. Yet fewer than one in four American adults exercises enough to reap those benefits, the agency says.

Edward Phillips, a Boston physician, is so sold on exercise he pedals on a stationary bike that’s integrated into his office desk. Phillips said exercise is “like taking a little bit of Prozac – an antidepressant – and a little bit of Ritalin, which is a stimulant.”

“Our bodies are meant to move,” he said. “Integrating movement into our day allows the system to work optimally. Part of the system that needs to work is our brain, and includes sleep, mood, cognition, ability to concentrate.”

A prescription for exercise is a bargain, said Stephanie Dennis, who works out on a treadmill to stay fit.

“\$10 a month is what? \$2 a week, \$2-\$2.50 a week,” she said. “A lot of people pay that every day for coffee. It’s not a big sacrifice for something that you get big rewards from.”