

Group wants to break NV Energy's monopoly

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

A group filed a ballot measure Feb. 3 that would create a competitive electricity market in Nevada to effectively end NV Energy's monopoly through a constitutional amendment.

The amendment would require the Legislature to create an open market for purchasing electricity and prohibit monopolies, according to language released by the Secretary of State's Office. Under the current structure, NV Energy operates as a regulated monopoly.

The measure is being supported by a newly formed political action committee, Nevadans for Affordable, Clean Energy Choices. Its backers have not yet identified themselves.

[Read the whole story](#)

Crime on the rise in El Dorado County

YEAR	<u>Yearly Crime Trends</u>						
	Homicide	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Veh Theft
2007	3	20	24	960	652	1350	32
2008	7	18	21	893	738	1286	15
2009	3	33	34	1033	715	1129	18
2010	3	15	34	976	864	1114	12
2011	2	21	21	899	1020	1241	12
2012	5	14	22	950	1252	772	18
2013	2	26	17	841	1276	749	52
2014	3	36	23	882	640	1320	21
2015	9	48	32	776	579	1414	43

Source: *El Dorado County Sheriff's Office*

Crime went up in El Dorado County in 2015 compared to 2014.

Sheriff's investigators want another year of data to be able to analyze if the change is because of Proposition 47. That is the voter-approved initiative that changed how some crimes are reported as well as the sentences for them.

One reason the number of rapes escalated is that as of Jan 1, 2015, that data includes reports not previously reported. There was also a change in reporting criteria for auto thefts as of that same date.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Skiing at Sierra to benefit area nonprofits

Sierra-at-Tahoe is offering reduced lift tickets during Snowsports Week, Feb. 8-11.

Tickets are \$50. All proceeds go to Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation, Barton Foundation, Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, and Sierra-at-Tahoe Educational Foundation.

Tickets must be purchased prior to arriving at the resort. Tickets are available by calling 530.543.5614.

South Tahoe offering Citizens Academy

South Lake Tahoe is accepting applications for the spring Citizens Academy.

The academy will be on consecutive Thursdays from 5:30-7:30pm beginning April 7 and running through May 19.

The free, seven-session interactive course is designed to provide residents with an in-depth look into municipal government, as well as information about the services and programs of the city.

This course is open to all community members.

Applications are being accepted through March 25 at 5pm. Applications and the course outline are **online**.

Time running out to register to caucus in Nev.

There is still time for Nevadans to register to vote in order to participate in the caucuses this month.

Any registered Democrat or Republican is eligible to participate and vote. The deadline to register is Feb. 13 for Republicans and Feb. 20 for Democrats.

Democrats caucus Feb. 20 beginning at 11am. The **Republicans** caucus Feb. 23 starting at 5pm.

EDC supes hope strategic plan is guiding light

By Joann Eisenbrandt

PLACERVILLE – Accountability. Integrity. Service excellence. Collaboration. These are the four organization core values that form the foundation of the three-year strategic plan El Dorado County is in the process of developing.

Work on the plan began in September 2014, when the Board of Supervisors had its first special workshop to discuss the county's mission, vision and value statements, and establish a

framework for a county strategic plan. The county had attempted to craft strategic plans in the past, most recently in 2007 and 2010, but they were never fully implemented.

Sherman Fox, the county's training and organizational development specialist, has been facilitating the strategic plan process since December 2014. He told *Lake Tahoe News*, "My role is the process. I'm the keeper of the document. But this wouldn't have happened unless the board all wanted this. I believe we can have the change that everybody wants. This county wants to go in a different direction. We just have to develop the process to get there."

Since then, the strategic plan has been taking shape. The county's vision statement and mission statement were reviewed and revised, and strategic plan goals were developed and adopted by the board in March 2015. Five "goal-setting" groups were formed, comprised of members of the board, county department heads and other staff, members of other community organizations and members of the public. No one was assigned to a specific group, but all chose the group they wanted to serve on. Each group focused on one of the five defined county strategic goals: healthy communities, economic development, public safety, infrastructure, and good county governance. The groups then began developing objectives and measures to achieve these goals. So far, they have focused on "macro" measures at the board level, but eventually "micro" measures will follow from these with specific strategies and implementation plans at the department and staff levels.

Fox sees a difference between the current process and past failed attempts. "The county has attempted to develop a strategic plan other times, but this is the first time where we have the majority of the county leadership and public engaged in the process. It's important to have as many major stakeholders involved as possible. It's hard to implement a plan if you don't have majority buy-in."

But defining “majority buy-in” can be tricky. The views of government officials and prominent community leaders on key county issues are well known. They are visibly and vocally involved in the decision-making process, whether as proponents or opponents. Finding out what the “ordinary” El Dorado County resident believes can be more elusive.

In mid-summer 2015, Fox explained, the strategic plan process came to a halt for this very reason. In order to gain broad-based input from residents on where they thought El Dorado County should go from here the county conducted a citizen engagement survey. An outside consultant, the Kiely Group, was hired to create the survey and then tabulate the results. It was posted on the county website, the city of Placerville website, in local newspapers and as a link from Facebook sites of relevant community groups. Town hall meetings were conducted by each supervisor to discuss the survey. Hard copies of the survey were also distributed throughout county communities.

Four focus groups were created and met in late 2015 in Placerville, Cameron Park and South Lake Tahoe. The goal was to get more insight into some key questions such as, “What is meant by rural when citizens refer to ‘keeping the county rural?’” “How will we know El Dorado isn’t run by a ‘Good Ol’ Boy’ network?” “What evidence is needed to show that the Tahoe basin is included in county government planning/decisions/services?” Focus group findings were included in the final survey report.

Of El Dorado County’s 183,087 residents as measured by the 2010 census, 2,228 responded to the survey. The 99-page final report includes quantitative data on the demographics of who responded, where they lived, their age, employment status and so on. It also included qualitative or narrative data where comments reflecting priorities and concerns of respondents in each of the five goal areas were recorded as well as their overall view of service priorities, how much and where they

wanted the county to grow, and how well they felt county government reflected their values.

At the Jan 26, Board of Supervisors meeting, Kiely Group CEO Laree Kiely presented an overview of the survey's purpose and results. As the survey's executive summary states, the objective was to gather information about citizens' thoughts and priorities to include in the strategic plan, as well as to test the most effective ways to reach out and engage citizens. "We did accomplish this," Kiely told the board.

Kiely said the survey response rate "was impressive," and explained that this was a representative sample, where the percentage of respondents in each category, such as age, match the actual percentage of that same category as shown in county census data. Random sampling, she noted, is not used because there is a bias in who answers and it is not a representative sample of the population demographics. The survey, Kiely told the board, has a confidence level of 95-99 percent with a 3 percent margin of error.

Ninety-five percent of respondents lived in El Dorado County full time, 62 percent were female, more than 68 percent were over the age of 50, most respondents were from Placerville and El Dorado Hills, a little more than half worked within county boundaries, and 7.33 percent considered themselves "actively" involved with county issues.

At the meeting, several questions about the validity of the survey's results were brought up. First, was what some termed a disproportionate amount of responses from government employees. Of the 2,228 respondents, 435 were government employees. While Kiely said the survey didn't ask respondents whether they were county, city, or federal government employees, the county had sent out two emails to its employees with a direct link to the survey. District 3 Supervisor Brian Veerkamp reminded the board, "Remember, all those government workers live here and the issues are relevant to them too."

Kiely said her group would pull out that data to check and see if it "skewed" the survey in any way.

Another concern was the fact that some people took the survey more than once, getting around the built-in IP address filtering by responding from different computers. Kiely said this would have had to have happened in very large numbers to affect the validity of the results. She added that they will go back and address this issue, but added it may also indicate the surfacing of another issue—a trust issue. District 5 Supervisor Sue Novasel agreed, "There is a general lack of trust in the county and it needs to be addressed at a very high level."

Survey results appear to bear this out. When asked how El Dorado County government reflects their values with regard to accountability, accessibility, transparency, integrity and trustworthiness, respondents generally gave the county low marks. They were asked to "grade" the degree to which the county lived up to these values on a scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The number of survey takers who together answered either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for each category was: Accountability 548; Accessibility 396; Transparency 462; Integrity 611; and Trustworthiness 645. For each of the five categories, approximately 500 respondents indicated they were "neutral."

Kiely noted that narrative data may be more important than the demographics. The survey included more than 40 pages of verbatim responses to questions. District 2 Supervisor Shiva Frentzen said she had read all of the comments, but also wanted to know what county districts they were coming from. This connection does not appear in the survey report. Kiely noted that the raw data belongs to the county and this can be pulled out.

District 4 Supervisor Michael Ranalli added, "There is much more to this exercise than science ... it's our willingness to

reach out to the public and ask them ... it's about our willingness to learn what they want."

Respondents identified the county's top challenges as growth/development and roads/traffic, followed by water/drought, business development and jobs. Across all age groups, the majority wanted "moderate growth" in new housing and business development, with more growth preferred by the younger age groups. As the survey noted, "The people appear to be accepting to some growth as long as it is done in alignment with the resources and values of the county." Very few respondents knew what supervisorial district they lived in or all the services the county provides. Only 200 respondents self-identified their district, with the rest being identified by the consultant from the communities they said they lived in.

Novasel spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* about the importance to residents in the Tahoe basin that they are included in county decision-making. "I did a **town hall meeting**," she said, "and we went over the survey and I think the biggest thing that struck me is how difficult it is because the county seat is so far away for the county to be responsive to the needs of Tahoe residents. It's my job to make sure they are responsive. The basin has special needs and they are often different than those of the West Slope. For example, we have TRPA and that changes the dynamics. We need better two-way communication. My hope is that the county will consider hiring a public information officer during the next round of budget talks."

When asked in a survey question what the county would look like if it functioned at its most effective and efficient levels, representative responses included:

"Ask the residents their opinions and then follow them." "Easy to contact for information, questions and requests." "More money spent on roads and replacing narrow bridges." "A better flow of information and more transparency." "A richly diverse

community that is healthy, sustainable, economically viable, resource-rich with a highly engaged population that is aware of and involved with making these things happen.” “Good health services to meet the needs of youth, general population and the elderly.”

“El Dorado County needs a balanced, well-thought-out long range plan that acknowledges constraints (water, jobs); preservation of a rural lifestyle is important. El Dorado County is on the brink of making decisions that will shape the face of the county; it’s important to get this right.” “The vocal minority should not be considered more in decisions than the silent majority.”

The entire Citizen Engagement Survey including all the verbatim responses can be found online. www.edcgov.us.

On Feb. 2, the board had a workshop where each of the five “goal-setting” teams gave a presentation on their work to date on their specific strategic goal and explained the objectives and macro measures identified for reaching it. The discussion emphasized that none of these goals could be reached in isolation and that there were many overlapping areas where cooperation and coordination among county departments and community organizations will be key.

Sherman Fox coordinated the discussion and asked those present, “What does it take for El Dorado County to adopt a strategic plan and live by it and allow it to provide guidance?” Everyone agreed that previous strategic plans had failed because there was no firm commitment to follow-through. Veerkamp pointed to the fact that, “In the past, the county hasn’t used the strategic plan document as an accountability document.” Supervisor Ranalli added, “We are accountable by asking how what we consider relates to the priorities of the strategic plan ... (it) also says what things are not a priority, so we don’t get distracted and get into the weeds.”

Kris Payne, a retired county engineer and member of the Infrastructure team, said he hadn't, "seen this level of team building in my 30 years of county employment."

The next step in the strategic plan process will occur in March or early April. There will be an all-day event at the county government center in Placerville. The five goal-setting teams will be assembled in individual rooms and each supervisor will have a 45-minute session with each team to ask questions and get information. Members of the public will also be invited to attend. A second day will be set aside for the board to meet in a workshop format and discuss what they've learned, and go over any additional information provided. If the board is fully satisfied with the plan's final design, it will then be formally adopted. The goal is to have an adopted strategic plan in place before the county begins budget talks later in the spring so that the plan's priorities can be transferred over into actual budget allocations.

None of the participants at Tuesday's workshop expects change to happen overnight. They see it as a longer, five- to 10-year process. This latest strategic plan could meet the fate of previous ones and gather dust on some obscure county shelf. Or it could be the starting point for improved internal county communication, increased citizen input and an enhanced level of confidence that El Dorado County is moving forward in the direction desired by those who live here.

Opinion: U.S. no longer shy about gun control

By Adam Winkler

When President Obama announced he would not endorse any candidate who doesn't support stricter gun laws, it was another marker in a sea change in the discourse over guns in America.

Even in the absence of significant new federal legislation, the gun debate has been transformed since Newtown—and Aurora. And Tucson. And San Bernardino. And . . . the list goes on, tragically. Mass shootings have brought so much public attention to gun violence that the conversation has changed radically.

How? For many years before the Newtown shooting in December 2012, Democrats avoided talking about new restrictions on guns for fear of losing votes. As a candidate Obama downplayed gun control and emphasized his support of the Second Amendment. Now the Democratic presidential contenders are making gun control central to their platforms.

But does this new conversation mean that we are on the verge of meaningful change in America's approach to guns?

There are hopeful signs. The gun control movement has been reinvigorated. Although Congress is stalled (on guns, along with a lot else), a significant percentage of the population lives in states that have enacted restrictive new gun laws: Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Maryland, California, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York among them. While the National Rifle Association has dominated campaign spending on gun issues for decades, there's a more level playing field now largely due to former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's money and former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' Super PAC. Polling shows widespread support, even among gun owners and NRA members, for reforms like universal background checks and banning people on terrorist watch lists from buying guns.

The country's growing diversity is a challenge for the NRA. Gun ownership remains disproportionately concentrated among

America's declining demographics: white, rural, non-college educated. The country is becoming more urbanized and college-educated—groups strongly supportive of gun control.

Ironically, the gun control's movement's gains have come on the heels of its most devastating loss: the 2008 U.S. Supreme Court decision announcing that, as the NRA claimed, the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. The decision sparked hundreds of legal challenges to gun control laws. Yet the lower courts have upheld all but a handful of gun laws and the Supreme Court has shown little interest since *Newtown* in deciding another Second Amendment case. This term, the justices agreed to hear a case involving a gun law—and specifically directed the advocates not to argue about the Second Amendment.

But for all the momentum, gun control has political and public relations problems. The NRA still has a very strong hold on Congress. Support for the idea of gun control generally is at historic lows (even as support for specific proposals is high). And so as many states have loosened their gun laws since *Newtown* as have strengthened them. Many of these laws are minor, but that's only because the NRA has been so successful that pro-gun advocates are left to push for guns in the few remaining places they aren't allowed: college campuses, bars, and kindergarten classrooms.

Besides the NRA, control advocates are often their own worst enemies. There are effective gun reforms worth adopting: universal background checks, better reporting of criminal and mental health data into the federal background check database, cracking down on rogue gun dealers. Yet advocates also push for predictably ineffective laws like bans on military-style rifles, which, contrary to common belief, are not machine guns and are rarely used in crime.

The 2016 elections could be pivotal for gun control. With more mass shootings undoubtedly to come, don't be surprised if the

election turns out to be a referendum on guns. If Democrats lose the White House, in an election they are widely predicted to win, gun control will be blamed and likely become once again the hidden stepchild of the Democratic Party platform. A Republican president, by contrast, could enact new—and looser—gun laws, like national legislation broadening the right to carry guns in public.

Gun control advocates have hope and significant political momentum. But they have much, much more to lose this election than they can hope to gain.

Adam Winkler is a professor at UCLA School of Law and the author of “Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America”. He wrote this for Zocalo Public Square.

Eating right can save the world

By Tim Zimmermann, Outside

“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.” That’s what the French lawyer Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who happened to have a deep love of gastronomy, wrote in 1825. A century later, a diet-hawking American nutritionist named Victor Lindlahr rendered it as: “You are what you eat.” I propose revising it further: Tell me what you eat and I will tell you how you impact the planet.

Most of us are aware that our food choices have environmental consequences. (Who hasn’t heard about the methane back draft from cows?) But when it comes to the specifics of why our decisions matter, we’re at a loss, bombarded with confusing

choices in the grocery-store aisles about what to buy if we care about planetary health. Are organic fruits and vegetables really worth the higher prices, and are they better for the environment? If I'm a meat eater, should I opt for free-range, grass-fed beef? Is it OK to buy a pineapple flown in from Costa Rica, or should I eat only locally grown apples?

The science of food's ecological footprint can be overwhelming, yet it's important to understand it. For starters, in wealthy societies food consumption is estimated to account for 20 to 30 percent of the total footprint of a household. Feeding ourselves dominates our landscapes, using about half the ice-free land on earth. It sends us into the oceans, where we have fished nearly 90 percent of species to the brink or beyond. It affects all the planet's natural systems, producing more than 30 percent of global greenhouse gases. Farming uses about 70 percent of our water and pollutes rivers with fertilizer and waste that in turn create vast coastal dead zones. The food on your plate touches everything.

"If you look at the heavy-hitter list of global-scale changes that are human induced, how we feed ourselves is invariably near the top," says Peter Tyedmers, a professor at Dalhousie University's School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who has been studying the world's food systems for 15 years. "But the great thing about food is that we have choices, and we have the opportunity to effect change three times a day."

So what does a sustainable diet actually look like? I've thought a lot about my food choices and became a vegan a few years ago, but I still don't know all the answers. So I set out to find them.

I didn't go hunting for a crazed notion of perfection. I was simply looking for an attainable way to eat—whether you're a vegan, a vegetarian, or an omnivore. Here's what I discovered.

Read the whole story

SLTFD honors members in its ranks

South Lake Tahoe firefighters recognized several people at the annual awards ceremony last month.

Awards include:

Firefighter of the year – Mike Mileski

Paramedic of the year – Sophie Tetlow

Dispatcher of the year – Linda Clark

STAT volunteer of the year – Leonard Smith.

Fire Chief Jeff Meston presented meritorious awards to Marty Creel, Kim George, Jody Benavidez, and Brenen Davis for their work on special projects.

Catching rainwater in Nevada is illegal

By Jaime Hayde, KRNV-TV

The Truckee River surged to its highest peak on Saturday since

2012 thanks to recent storms, bringing into light the issue of collecting rainwater.

In Nevada, it's illegal to catch rainwater with any type of system. However, the hot topic could be up for debate during the next legislative session.

Nevada law states that collecting rainwater with any type of rain catching systems, whether it's with a rain barrel or even a bucket, is illegal. And Nevada's state Engineer believes that law should change.

Read the whole story