

Calif. judge throws out kill-gays ballot measure

By Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO – A California judge has thrown out a proposed ballot initiative that advocated killing anyone who engages in gay sex, calling the measure “patently unconstitutional.”

Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Raymond Cadei relieved California’s attorney general late Monday of the duty to clear the so-called Sodomite Suppression Act for signature-gathering. Cadei said it would be “inappropriate, waste public resources, generate unnecessary divisions among the public, and tend to mislead the electorate” for Attorney General Kamala Harris to process the proposal.

Harris had asked for a judge’s permission in March to reject the initiative through a legal complaint against its sponsor, Orange County lawyer Matthew McLaughlin. After McLaughlin did not attempt to defend the measure in court, the attorney general last week sought a default ruling in her favor, a request Cadei granted.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Washoe County Sheriff’s Office launched its new Lake Tahoe patrol boat on June 23 at Incline Village.

- Lake Tahoe Community College on June 26 at 6pm will see 184 students receive their AA degrees; 43 are graduating with honors, and nine with highest honors. Another 40 students are receiving departmental certificates.
 - The National Council on Interpreting in Health Care has named Tracy Young a 2015 Language Access Champion. Young is the language access services coordinator for Barton Health.
 - League to Save Lake Tahoe's Eyes on the Lake Training is July 15 from 5:30-8:30pm in South Lake Tahoe. RSVP online for location and additional details.
 - Introduction to Content Management is the topic of the July 7 5-7pm Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce workshop. It is free for members and \$15 for non-members. Register by calling 775.588.1728.
-

Response to Washington Fire questioned

Updated June 24 10:03pm:

"Fire is burning in hazardous and inaccessible terrain and approaching an increasing number of structures and impacting travel corridors," authorities report.

Updated June 24 6:19pm:

The fire has grown to 17,205 acres and is 10 percent contained.

There are now 900 people fighting the fire that was started by lightning.

Warmer temperatures are expected through Saturday, with a possible record high on Friday. Thunderstorms are forecast for Saturday and Sunday. The moisture would be helpful, but the threat of more lightning is worrisome to fire agencies throughout the area.

Updated June 24 8:40am:

Firefighters have 5 percent containment of the Washington Fire. The acreage burned is 16,544. Nearly 700 people are now fighting the fire.

By Kathryn Reed and Susan Wood

People who live and work in the area are raising questions about the response time of the Washington Fire.

The initial response was June 19 at 7pm, according to fire officials. By Saturday night the fire was at 350 acres, by Sunday night the acreage consumed was 6,500, by Monday night it reached 14,942 acres and as of Tuesday evening the burned area is 16,543 acres.

"The fire was reported at noon to 1 on Friday. There were no winds until Saturday. No one did anything about it. There are a variety of things they could have done. Well, that's Alpine County for you," Tom Abdoo, Markleeville property and business owner, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Larry Lucas said the Forest Service took over the fire at 6am June 22. He has asked local authorities for a time line detailing the response to the fire.

Lightning started the fire, the wind then spread it.



Smoke fills the drive into Carson City via Spooner Summit on June 23. Photo/Susan Wood

However, the fire is burning on Forest Service land in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest so the feds should have had authority the entire time.

A Forest Service employee told *Lake Tahoe News* their firehouses are not staffed around the clock during the fire season.

Alpine County itself is serviced by a volunteer fire department.

Any delay in getting resources to the fire could have been the result of who was notified first. People don't tend to call the USFS dispatch. Instead, they call 911. Which dispatch center that call goes to depends on the nearest cell tower to the caller.

In 2007 during the start of the Angora Fire the 911 calls went

to CHP dispatch in Truckee which at first told everyone it was a controlled burn and not to worry.

The weather conditions on that June 24 were very similar to this past weekend's – high winds and low humidity. These conditions had been in the forecast, with the National Weather Service having issued alerts about red flag days for the entire weekend.

With Angora, 254 houses were reduced to ash in a matter of hours. With the Washington Fire, 15 buildings are in imminent danger and the town of Markleeville is threatened. Fire officials on the night of June 23, though, didn't have information about how far the flames are from this Alpine County town.

Lake Valley has sent one engine to the Washington Fire, while Tahoe Douglas has firefighters in San Bernardino.

Most of the Tahoe agencies are staying put because the local conditions warrant firefighters being on alert. The state mutual aid system is voluntary, so departments don't have to send crews if the local needs warrant staying put.

The Forest Service is using 11 helicopters, eight air tankers – including two DC-10s, 17 engines, three water tenders, and about 500 people to fight the Washington Fire. At one point the blaze was 10 percent contained, but the conditions worsened and the firefighters lost the upper hand. There is no containment this evening.

What it is costing to fight the fire each day has not been disclosed.

On a related note, Liberty Utilities has canceled the June 24 and July 1 planned power outage for parts of Alpine County because of the fire. The outage was scheduled to allow crews to replace power poles in the area.

Prison, probation for 2 men involved in Stateline man's death

By Sarah Jarvis, Arizona Republic

A Phoenix man was sentenced to 4 1/2 years in prison this month after prosecutors said he killed his roommate and left the burned body of the Lake Tahoe man in the desert in 2013.

Vrouyr Manoukian, 24, was convicted of negligent homicide and abandonment of body in the death of 24-year-old Matthew McMaster of Stateline. The 740 days Manoukian has spent incarcerated while awaiting trial will count toward his sentence, meaning he will spend about 2 1/2 more years in prison.

Investigators found McMaster's body in a northwest Phoenix desert in July 2013.

The other roommate involved in the fight that led to Matthew McMaster's death, Randall Lee Young, was charged with a probation-only offense. He was sentenced to three years

probation.

Read the whole story

Truckee crews keep fire to less than 1 acre

Truckee firefighters were able to contain a fire in the South Ponderosa neighborhood on Palisades Drive to one-quarter acre.

Officials said no structures were damaged nor were they threatened in the June 23 blaze. The fire consumed natural vegetation.

The cause is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Cyclist hit on Pioneer Trail dies

By James Gilbert, Yuma Sun

Yuma, Ariz., resident Donald Michael Irwin, who was hit by a vehicle last week while riding his bike in South Lake Tahoe has died, according to the family.

Jay Irwin, a federal magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona in Yuma, said his brother was taken off life support and passed away that afternoon.

“(Donald) was probably out riding in preparation for another triathlon,” Jay Irwin said of the accident in which his 70-year-old brother was killed.

The California Highway Patrol reports that the incident happened as a 35-year-old California man was driving his 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee northbound on Pioneer Trail while going between 45 and 50 mph. Irwin was traveling in the same direction at about 20 mph.

Read the whole story

Letter: Explaining tiered water rates

To the community,

Regarding the successful challenge of tiered rates in San Juan Capistrano, I wanted to share the district’s perspective with you. We feel that the challenge was successful on the grounds that the extremely high top tiers at SJC were unsupported by any expense analysis, and were, by SJC’s own admission, purely punitive in nature in order to financially coerce high water using customers to reduce their usage.

At the district, we only have two tiers, and that’s for residential customers only. The second tier is 50 percent higher than the first tier, and only is used when the customer exceeds the average residential use in the district by

approximately 73 percent for the quarter. Last year, the district only collected about \$33,000 from the differential pricing for the use in this second tier.

Our water conservation program expenses, geared largely to reduce the landscape watering causing these higher use amounts virtually always occurring in the summer quarters, were approximately \$180,000.

The district is not concerned about defending our current pricing structure, given the expenses of running our water conservation program.

Richard Solbrig, South Tahoe Public Utility District general manager

Safety fence going in at Truckee railyard

Union Pacific Railroad will install a safety fence along the downtown Truckee corridor from the McIver Train Depot Fence 1 Crossing roundabout to Bridge Street.

Crossing railroad tracks in non-designated areas is considered trespassing, punishable by fines or arrest. Last year in California, 154 pedestrians were injured or killed while illegally crossing train tracks, including one in Truckee.

Union Pacific Railroad has grown increasingly concerned with the number of pedestrians illegally crossing the tracks downtown, prompting the company to install a safety fence.

The fence will be aesthetically similar to the Depot wrought iron fence.

Safety tips:

- The only safe place to cross is at a designated public crossing with a crossbuck, flashing red lights, or a gate. Cross tracks **ONLY** at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings.
 - It can take a mile or more to stop a train, so a locomotive engineer who suddenly sees someone on the tracks will likely be unable to stop in time.
 - Do not cross the tracks immediately after a train passes. A second train might be blocked by the first. Trains can come from either direction. Wait until you can see clearly around the first train in both directions.
 - Flashing red lights indicate a train is approaching from either direction. Never walk around or behind lowered gates at a crossing, and do not cross the tracks until the lights have stopped flashing and it's safe to do so.
 - Be aware trains do not follow set schedules.
-

Taxing time ahead for Nevada business

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Come July, life will get more taxing for Nevada business.

That's when the so-called "commerce tax," a new state levy based on annual gross revenue and the core of the historic tax package approved by the 2015 Legislature, starts.

The first annual payment to the state Department of Taxation

won't be due for another year – summer 2016 – but the levy will be based on gross revenue generated within Nevada's borders as of July 1, 2015.

And, observers say, it behooves businesses – even those small enough not to meet the tax's minimum threshold of \$4 million annual adjusted gross revenue – to pay attention now given its size and complexity.

Read the whole story

Markleeville fire grows, smoke fills valley

While the Washington Fire continues to grow, the town of Markleeville has not been hit.

The fire burning south of the Alpine County enclave is at 16,544 acres.

It was first spotted the night of June 19. Lightning ignited the blaze and horrendous winds have fanned it.

There are 11 helicopters and eight air tankers working to contain the fire. This is in addition to the personnel on the ground. The fire is burning out of control – with zero percent containment.

Highways 4 and 89 in the Monitor Pass area are closed. Turtle Rock and Indian Creek campgrounds are closed.

One firefighter has been treated for a heat-related injury.

Smoke is a factor for the Carson Valley and Carson City areas.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*