

New California Supreme Court surprises analysts

By Maura Dolan, Los Angeles Times

When Gov. Jerry Brown's two latest nominees joined the California Supreme Court in January, legal analysts foresaw the creation of a more liberal majority.

The first test came in March, when the seven-member court had to decide whether to reconsider a death penalty case. Justices Mariano-Florentino Cuellar and Leondra R. Kruger provided two crucial votes to give the death row inmate another chance to argue that his sentence should be overturned.

But in a case involving a law that some judges said had been inspired by homophobia, Cuellar and Kruger were on different sides.

Although it is still too early to assess the impact of Brown's appointees, "it tells us they are not voting as a bloc," Santa Clara University Professor Gerald Uelman said.

Read the whole story

Ethnicity of author changes readers' perspective

By Sunili Govinnage, Washington Post

In 2014, I decided that for the entire year, I would not read books written by white authors. My goal was to address the

reading practices I developed growing up in Australia, where white authors have dominated the literary world. My high school reading list was filled with the “classics” – Shakespeare, Austen, the Brontes, Euripides – and well-known modern writers such as Margaret Atwood and T.S. Eliot. After school, my pleasures came from bestseller lists, which also were filled with Anglo names: John Grisham, Peter Carey, Hilary Mantel. Then I read “Questions of Travel” by Sri Lanka-born Michelle de Kretser. It moved me so deeply that I decided to evaluate the literature I was reading. I quit my standard diet to expose myself to new perspectives.

But it was much harder than I expected to discover books by nonwhite authors. The resources most readers use to find good literature left me with all the usual suspects. White authors reign in book reviews, bestseller lists, literary awards and Amazon.com recommendations.

In a survey of *New York Times* articles published in 2011, author and cultural commentator Roxane Gay discovered that nearly 90 percent of the reviewed books were authored by white writers. Among Amazon editors’ top 20 picks of 2014, just three authors were minorities.

Read the whole story

Nev. lawmakers take Colo. marijuana tour

By Trevor Hughes, USA Today

DENVER – With smiles, selfies and a few nervous chuckles, a group of Nevada legislators and policymakers got a first-hand

look at Colorado's fast-growing legal marijuana industry this weekend, coming face-to-face with thousands of green growing plants.

The small group is part of Nevada's efforts to understand what legalization could mean. The Silver State has permitted medical marijuana, and now there's talk voters might be asked to legalize recreational pot next year.

The group met its Colorado counterparts, and toured several marijuana stores, including the high-tech, 40,000-square-foot Medicine Man in Denver, one of the state's largest.

Read the whole story

Liberty Utilities to ax coal from power supply

By Kathryn Reed

Liberty Utilities is removing coal from its power portfolio.

On April 24 it filed a request with the California Public Utilities Commission to change its allocation from NV Energy. This came one week after it filed paperwork to add solar.

"... as of Jan. 1, 2016, the resource portfolio available to serve Liberty Utilities' California customers will be exclusively from hydroelectric, natural gas, or geothermal facilities and, importantly, no longer include any coal-fired generation," the document says.

Today, Liberty buys all of its power from NV Energy.

In 2011, Liberty bought NV Energy's service area that includes about 49,000 customers on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, in Truckee, Alpine County and other areas of Northern California. The service agreement expires at the end of the year.

Liberty and NV on April 21 reached an agreement on another contract that calls for the elimination of the coal plant. This will mean Liberty will be paying NV Energy about \$2.34 million less per year. That contract is good through 2022. It is up to the California Public Utilities Commission to approve the service agreement.

"Given NV Energy's pursuit of non-coal fired energy sources as well as Liberty's, we believe we will be able to meet our customers' future demands in an economic fashion without the dependence on coal-fired energy," Rich Salgo, vice president of operations for Liberty, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Liberty is also asking for the CPUC to approve the solar projects. It plans to buy and operate two solar plants that combined are 65 megawatt facilities. These facilities will more than replace the coal.

If the solar plants have a glitch, NV will supply the requisite amount of power to Liberty. The contract says Liberty could purchase up to 30.5 percent of its renewable energy from NV if the solar plants are not available.

With all the changes, Liberty expects to save \$200,000 per year.

California law mandates that sellers of electricity must have 33 percent of their load be serviced with renewable energy by 2020. This will help Liberty reach that mandate. As of September 2014, the latest data available, the mix NV supplied Liberty was 52.44 percent natural gas, 21.7 percent renewable,

20 percent coal, 4.45 percent hydro, 1.4 percent nuclear and 0.01 percent oil.

“We will continue to pursue energy sources that will enable us to meet California’s increasing renewable energy requirements through 2020,” Salgo said.

NV in 2013 said it would begin eliminating coal immediately. However, the Valmy plant in Humboldt County, Nev., is expected to be online through 2025. That plant as of next year will not be supplying Liberty customers, assuming the CPUC approves the proposals.

Earlier this month the Tahoe Area Sierra Club had a talk focused on Liberty’s use of coal and the desire to have the power company change its practices.

“We are impressed with the groundswell of local support we have seen for this initiative to go coal free. Liberty was cooperative throughout our discussions and we congratulate them for coming to a good decision – good for Tahoe, Liberty and the warming planet,” Grace Anderson, lead volunteer for the Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign Tahoe Basin, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The national conservation organization had been putting pressure on the utility to discontinue using Valmy. Sharing the Sierra Club’s point-of-view were the local chapter as well as the Mother Lode and Toiyabe chapters, South Tahoe Citizens Climate Lobby, and Sierra Nevada Alliance.

SLT revamping what it charges for city services

By Kathryn Reed

The South Lake Tahoe City Council next week is expected to adopt a fee schedule for services that better reflects the cost of doing business.

Last week the council heard a presentation about what is being proposed and directed staff to make some changes. Looking at the campground fees, how nonprofits are treated and possibly charging more than the cost of doing business – where legally allowed – are some issues council members wanted reviewed.

“We’re not in the charity business. I support the full cost of recovery,” Councilman Austin Sass said at the April 21 meeting. “We are a business. We are not in the business of underwriting businesses.”

One could argue giving incentives like commercial floor area for a developer to build on the corner of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard, which the entire council approved, is underwriting a business.

Recreation was kept separate from the fee schedule because that is often an area where municipalities provide a subsidy to its citizens. Still, it is up to the council who pays what for which service.

It had been 10 years since the city last did a thorough analysis of the fees. The goal is for the city to know what the true cost of a service is. This was a cost-recovery study, not a market recovery study.

“The term ‘full cost’ means the direct and indirect costs borne by the city of South Lake Tahoe to deliver the service,”

the April 21 staff report says. "Direct costs are defined by the labor and materials expended specific to that program while indirect costs include city administrative functions such as central support departments that have an indirect role supporting the activities of the departments."

The fee schedule covers everything – from grading permits to getting a copy of a police report to renting facilities. Some fees like ticket counter space at the airport have been deleted, whereas a fire dancer permit is new.

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Notes:

- South Lake Tahoe City Council meets May 5 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Letter: Wyndham returns to B&B

To the community,

Wyndham Vacation Ownership hosted the mini Thanksgiving dinner served on April 20 by Bread & Broth. The diners enjoyed hot turkey sandwiches, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy and cranberry sauce.

The hearty meal was served by the spirited Wyndham team members Jacob Garcia, Matthew Rigdon, John Hutto and Ruby Garcia. B&B would like to thank Wyndham Vacation Ownership for sponsoring its second Adopt A Day of Nourishment in four weeks and sending another great team of volunteers.

"This overall is a wonderful experience," said John Hutton. "Very fulfilling to the soul."

As with all of the sponsor volunteer crews, working the serving line, hearing the genuine "thank yous" and experiencing the gratitude of those they are serving is a touching experience and fulfills a sense of community.

"The people of the community have so much need, and it is truly a pleasure to help fill that void (albeit small) that we can provide," added Hutton. "Thank you so much for the opportunity. We would love to do this again soon."

B&B appreciates all of the help and support that it receives from Wyndham Vacation Ownership and their very community minded employees. To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Calif. drought tests strength of water rights

By David Siders and Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

High above a landscape parched by unremitting drought, Meadow Valley Creek courses through the northern Sierra Nevada and pools in a stand of alders behind a tiny, concrete dam.

Robert Forbes draws water from the reservoir through an overturned smokestack and into a ditch that has run west of Quincy for more than 100 years.

He adjusted a piece of plywood at its mouth to restrict the

flow one recent morning. In dry years, Forbes said, “I start rationing people along the line.”

Forbes’ family’s access to this water derives from an 1870s claim in Plumas County; and his antiquated management of the ditch – breaking ice with a shovel in the winter, negotiating irrigation schedules among neighbors when the weather warms – has persisted for decades with little intervention.

Earlier this year, the state Water Resources Control Board ordered more than 1,000 property owners to prove their water rights. This month, the board warned claim-holders to expect curtailments of their ability to divert water from rivers and streams.

The actions are significant because they include the state’s most senior water rights holders – those claimed before California established its permitting process in 1914.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- There will be a Memorial Day ceremony at Happy Homestead Cemetery in South Lake Tahoe on May 25 at 11am.

- Tahoe Turning Point is hosting its inaugural charity golf tournament on Sept. 17 at the Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers. For more info, click on the flyer.

- A perinatal substance abuse conference will be Sept. 10 from

8:30am-4pm at Lake Tahoe Community College. Physician Thomas Hale will be the keynote speaker.

- The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics has approved Sierra Nevada College as a member effective Aug. 1.
 - For the sixth consecutive year South Tahoe High School students are among the winners in the U.S. Congressional Art contest. Teresa Tenocelotl won second for her photograph entitled "Wind". Kyle Robertson won third "Elder". The two honorable mentions went to Vanessa Pacheco and Alexandra Cody.
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LTCC making administrative changes

Lake Tahoe Community College is rejiggering administrative positions.

Mostly it is about changing titles and not new hires.

The previous research director position has been changed to director of Institutional Effectiveness. This person will be responsible for research, planning, and student learning outcomes. This position is vacant. The college is also looking for an executive director of the Foundation and College Advancement, with the college and LTCC Foundation splitting the expense of that person.

The April 21 staff report says, "Over the past 18 months various resignations from Lake Tahoe Community College, changing workloads due to changes in enrollment and how full-time equivalent students are generated, and opportunities for college staff to promote and train into positions, the

superintendent-president is recommending a reorganization of most of the direct reports to president.”

- Michelle Risdon, interim executive dean of Instruction, will be interim vice president of Academic Affairs.
 - Sue Gochis, dean of Student Academic Support Services, will be executive dean of Student Success.
 - Shelley Hansen, interim manager of Human Resources, is now director of Human Resources.
 - Diane Lewis moves from interim Marketing and Communications manager to director of Marketing and Communications.
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Same-sex marriage case lawyers set to make history

By Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press

WASHINGTON – One is a legend on the civil rights circuit, a veteran of battles for gay and lesbian rights and a MacArthur Foundation genius grant winner – who has never argued in the U.S. Supreme Court before but, nonetheless, may have recent history on her side.

The other is a baby-faced, bow-tied former west Michigan lawyer and former state solicitor general, easygoing and talkative, who has stood before the Supreme Court eight times already and has some key victories to his credit.

On Tuesday, when Mary Bonauto and John Bursch go before the court to argue the constitutionality of Michigan’s 2004 same-sex marriage ban, they may make history: A decision by the

court – expected by summer – could extend the right to marry to same-sex couples over the objections of several states, or deal a harsh blow to a gay rights movement that has been on a winning streak.

Michigan will be at the center of the case, though its national implications are well-known: In the balance is a patchwork of laws and legal decisions that currently allow same-sex couples to marry in 37 states and Washington, D.C., but prohibit it elsewhere, denying gay and lesbian couples and their children the legal benefits and protections marriage provides, but maintaining what has been the long-held, traditional view of marriage as being only between a man and a woman.

Read the whole story