

Opinion: Stop playing the national anthem at games

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

I have a solution for the national anthem debate that has gripped the sports world – and to some degree the entire country – over the last year: stop playing “The Star-Spangled Banner” before sports events.

There was a time when the anthem wasn’t played prior to games. It was actually rare prior to World War II.

During the Vietnam War, all teams started playing it before games and the tradition that stuck. But why? At its soul, the anthem is a war song. The teams on the field aren’t going to war. They’re playing a game, one U.S. city against another.

There aren’t any “bombs bursting in air” or “rockets red glare” on the diamond, hardwood or gridiron. There’s no reason for the anthem to be played beforehand.

Read the whole story

Nestlé makes billions bottling water it pays nearly nothing for

By Caroline Winter, New York Times

In rural Mecosta County, Mich., sits a near-windowless

facility with a footprint about the size of Buckingham Palace. It's just one of Nestlé's roughly 100 bottled water factories in 34 countries around the world.

Inside, workers wear hairnets, hard hats, goggles, gloves, and earplugs. Ten production lines snake through the space, funneling local spring water into 8-ounce to 2.5-gallon containers; most of the lines run 24/7, each pumping out 500 to 1,200 bottles per minute. About 60 percent of the supply comes from Mecosta's springs and arrives at the factory via a 12-mile pipeline. The rest is trucked in from neighboring Osceola County, about 40 miles north. "Daily, we're looking at 3.5 million bottles potentially," says Dave Sommer, the plant's 41-year-old manager, shouting above the din.

Silos holding 125 tons of plastic resin pellets provide the raw material for the bottles. They're molded into shape at temperatures reaching 400F before being filled, capped, inspected, labeled, and laser-printed with the location, day, and minute they were produced—a process that takes less than 25 seconds. Next, the bottles are bundled, shrink-wrapped onto pallets, and picked up by a fleet of 25 forklifts that ferry them to the plant's warehouse or loading docks. As many as 175 trucks arrive every day to transport the water to retail locations in the Midwest. "We want more people to drink water, keep hydrated," Sommer says. "It would be nice if it were my water, but we just want them to drink water."

Read the whole story

Supreme Court to hear sports-

betting case

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case that could legalize sports betting across the country on Dec. 4, according to a calendar published by the court.

The Supreme Court decided to hear the case, *Christie v. NCAA*, in June. “Christie” refers to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, and the case is an attempt by that state to overturn a lower court’s ruling that blocked an attempt to legalize sports betting in the Garden State.

The case involves the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), passed in 1992, which prohibits sports betting nationwide except for four states: Nevada, Montana, Delaware and New Jersey.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Free tuition in Calif. worth celebrating

By Jeff DeFranco

I have some exciting news to share. Gov. Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 19 into law Friday afternoon, enabling California community colleges to provide a year of free tuition for the 2018-19 academic year. I have been pleased to personally lend my name and support to the Rise California campaign. I’m thrilled to see this new program as a result of their efforts. Free community college could be a game changer

for our students and our state.



Jeff DeFranco

This bill waives the cost of first-year fees for any first-time student who enrolls full-time at any one of the 114 California community colleges. As you know, cost is a genuine barrier to many otherwise college-bound students. The effect of this bill for California is enormous, with the potential to have a significant impact on our citizens' ability to earn good livelihoods, experience real upward mobility, contribute to their communities and local workforces, and to bring in hundreds of thousands of new students into our system.

To be eligible for the California College Promise, students must be California residents enrolled full-time in a community college and complete a free application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) or a California Dream Act application. Income will not be a factor in whether they receive a waiver under this program. The California College Promise is estimated to cost an additional \$33 million beyond the funds already accessed by students through the BOG Fee Waiver.

The next task for Brown and the state Department of Finance is to locate the funding to cover this cost in next year's state budget to fully roll out the promise of a free first year of college. This will take place in the 2018-19 budget process starting with the governor's budget proposal which is typically rolled out in January. It is also important to note that this is a pilot program for the 2018-19 academic year and it will be essential to demonstrate the benefits of this

program if it is to be renewed for future years.

We'll have much more about the California College Promise in the days and weeks to come. It will be important for us to be ready to serve these students who are coming to LTCC for the first time. For now, join me in celebrating this milestone of access for all Californians.

Jeff DeFranco is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

Wine Country death toll – 40, fires still rage

By Joseph Serna, Laura J. Nelson, Chris Megerian and Sonali Kohli, Los Angeles Times

As the death toll rose to 40, firefighters struggled Saturday to get the upper hand against several massive wildfires that have ravaged Northern California for almost a week.

Strong winds kicked up overnight in the central Napa Valley region, causing some fires to spread and triggering evacuations in Sonoma and elsewhere, officials said.

Fire officials feared that winds forecast for Saturday would be similar to those that stoked the first flames last Sunday night, which have since exploded to more than 15 fires that have scorched 220,000 acres, destroyed an estimated 5,700 structures and caused at least 40 deaths.

Despite low humidity and red flag warnings throughout the region, however, the winds appeared to calm down by Saturday afternoon, aiding firefighters who have been battling the fire

around the clock since they broke out on Oct. 8, officials said.

Read the whole story

Climate change turning the dial on Calif. wildfires

By Stefan Becket, CBS News

The deadly wildfires ravaging Northern California have destroyed more than 3,500 homes and businesses, leveling entire neighborhoods and forcing thousands of residents to flee the flames.

At least 40 people have died in the blazes, which have burned 265 square miles of land and rank among the most destructive in California's history. The wildfires kicking off California's fire season come after millions of acres in the western U.S. went up in flames over the summer.

Experts say fires like those burning up Wine Country will be more frequent, more intense and last longer as global temperatures rise. While no single fire can be said to have been caused by climate change, variations in temperature and precipitation are already affecting the complex dynamics that determine how wildfires develop and spread.

Gov. Jerry Brown laid the blame squarely at the feet of climate change on Wednesday.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- If you notice a greater number of military aircraft in the area – even at night – it's likely the Marines. They are in town for training; based out of Lake Tahoe Airport.
- Here is the El Dorado-Tahoe roadwork schedule from Caltrans for the week.
- Chukar and Hungarian partridge hunting seasons in Nevada began Oct. 14.
- Three-time Grammy nominee Robin Thicke will perform at MontBleu in Stateline on Nov. 25 at 8pm. General admission tickets are \$65 and \$75, plus tax and fees.
- There will be a flu clinic on Oct. 19 from 10:30am-12:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center. No appointment needed. Cost is \$10; no one will be turned away for inability to pay.

Hard Rock going pink for breast cancer

Hard Rock Lake Tahoe is rocking a propertywide push for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, turning its exterior lights pink and urging employees and guests to join in support of the South Lake Tahoe Cancer League.

Throughout the month, a portion of the proceeds from sales of

limited edition “Pinktober” T-shirts, pins, and the Hard Rock’s signature Pink Hard Lemonade drinks will benefit the non-profit, and guests can also give by purchasing a \$50 upgrade to a “Pinktober” room with a lakeside balcony.

Hard Rock employees will be having a breast cancer awareness door decoration competition, as well as making donations in exchange for merchandise and the chance to leave their handprints on a “Love All, Serve All” wall.

Now in its 37th year, the South Lake Tahoe Cancer League is a 100 percent volunteer organization offering no-cost resources – including transportation and limited financial assistance grants – to cancer patients who are in active treatment. All funding for its programs comes from individual and business donations.

Calif. will provide a year of free community college for new students

By Alexei Koseff, Sacramento Bee

California community colleges will provide a year of free tuition after Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday signed legislation that aims to boost declining enrollment and address a shortage of college-educated workers in the state.

Assembly Bill 19 waives the first year of fees for any first-time student who enrolls full-time at one of 114 community colleges in the state. About half of the system’s 2.1 million

students already receive fee waivers because of financial need.

Read the whole story

Threat of fire a problem for insureds in Tahoe-Truckee

By Melissa Siig, Moonshine Ink

About a year ago, Tahoe City resident Kevin Plumb received a letter from The Hartford that it would not be renewing his homeowner's insurance because his fire protection classification had jumped to a six. (The rating is from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least risky.)

Plumb, a contractor who had insured his West Shore house in the Talmont neighborhood for a decade with the company, was shocked. He had been a diligent homeowner and dedicated client. A few years ago during a home remodel project, Plumb cut down all the dead and dying trees from his property. He also had auto insurance and a second home insured with The Hartford. Nevertheless, he was given three months to find a new insurance carrier. After calling every major insurance company he could find, he finally had to settle with Lloyd's of London, and his insurance premiums tripled.

Plumb is not alone. Homeowners all around the basin and Truckee are seeing their homeowner's insurance policies not renewed or premiums increasing as insurance companies try to minimize their risks with regards to wildfire.

Read the whole story