

EDC grappling with CalPERS, worker obligations

By Kathryn Reed

The financial situation in El Dorado County continues to deteriorate.

The obligation to retirees via CalPERS keeps growing and contract negotiations with employees could be going better.

The county's unfunded obligation to the California Public Employees Retirement System is more than \$346 million. This is \$64 million more than when the last actuarial report was done.

"Further, CalPERS has informed the county that seven years from now the required annual payments to CalPERS will be \$22 million per year higher than they are now. Balancing the county's budget and providing critical public safety and road maintenance services will become much tougher in the future because of our unfunded obligation to CalPERS," Auditor-Controller Joe Harn told *Lake Tahoe News*.

If the county were to withdraw from CalPERS, it would cost more than \$1 billion to do so.

The county is not alone in its debt to the retirement agency. The problem is there is no plan to deal with it. It's like the county's leaders – elected and otherwise – are wishing the problem would go away.

Carla Hass, spokeswoman for the county, merely said staff is concerned and looking at options. The only option she pointed to is if there is any extra money at the end of the fiscal year, it will go to offset PERS increases.

Supervisor Shiva Frentzen, who is chair of the board, did not respond to *Lake Tahoe News'* questions.

Harn this week sent the entire board a letter outlining the gravity of the situation, as he has done year-in-and-year-out. But the actions by the powers that be make it appear his words are falling on deaf ears.

"The county needs more tools and options that are not currently available to reduce these unaffordable and insurmountable unfunded obligations," Harn said. "The Board of Supervisors should seek the assistance of California State Association of Counties, CalPERS and our representatives in the Legislature so that changes in state law and CalPERS policies will provide better options to enable us to reduce these unaffordable obligations. What we can do locally now is work to set aside significantly more funds in our reserves to help cover these costs in the future."

For some reason, when CalPERS told member agencies in 1999 that it was overfunded, everyone believed this to be true. Now, though, when CalPERS is issuing forecasts for further indebtedness for the next five years, many of these same agencies are not taking the threat seriously.

In 1999, in order to pay back public employee unions for massive campaign contributions then-Gov. Gray Davis and a super majority of the Legislature passed Senate Bill 400. This allowed the state, counties, cities and special districts in California to offer employees drastically enhanced retirement benefits retroactively.

"CalPERS gave the county ridiculously low cost estimates in 1999. CalPERS projected that the retroactive application of dramatically enhanced retirement benefits would not increase the cost to the county for the next 11 years," Harn said.

That projection could not have been further from reality.

El Dorado County supervisors ignored warnings from Harn at that time and instead offered employees dramatically enhanced retirement benefits on a retroactive basis.

The county has continued to add fuel to this financial catastrophe by giving exorbitant raises. It wasn't that long ago employees received 15 percent raises. This in turn increases the county's PERS obligation.

The county and Local 1 are in negotiations now. The union represents more than 900 employees.

"The county did a class and comp study last year that they want to base their proposals on, but they feel it will take them another year to 18 months to be ready. We want to negotiate a contract now, so it's more of a process issue than an amount issue," union rep Jere Copeland told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The only real issue is wages. Any decisions on job actions would be made after we declare impasse."

The union is tired of waiting for the county to talk numbers. While a strike would be a ways off, impasse could be reached this fall.

The county spokeswoman had this to say: "The negotiations are not public and are addressed in closed session with the Board of Supervisors. We continue to meet with Local No. 1 representatives in good faith and work toward an agreement that is satisfactory to both parties."

Opinion: Eliminating DACA would be wrong

By Minerva G. Carcanó

For a nation that prides itself on its care for children, efforts to eliminate the Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA) program seem contradictory to this value and mean-spirited. Eliminating DACA would be a punishing of the innocent and a crippling of our future.

Nearly 800,000 young people have benefited from DACA. Under DACA these young people have been able to come out of the shadows receiving short-term but important legal status, and work authorization. DACA recipients, however, have received no free benefit. They have had to pay legal and processing fees to become recipients of DACA. They have had to keep their DACA up to date by paying additional fees, attending school at their own cost and working. For the opportunity to stay in the country they were brought to without any say on their part, DACA recipients have had to work hard. They have received nothing for free. These same DACA recipients do, however, bring great benefits to the U.S.



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It is estimated that DACA recipients represent 695,000 of the nation's workforce. According to a recent study, "A New Threat to DACA Could Cost States Billions of Dollars" by Nicole Prchal Svajlenka and others, removing DACA recipients from the U.S. workforce would result in a loss of \$460.3 billion from the national GDP over the next decade. DACA recipients have benefited the economy of the entire country. The loss of their labor would conversely have a negative impact on our national economy. From a practical economic perspective, eliminating DACA seems very short-sighted.

I have met these DACA recipients. They are bright, committed young people like other young people. They aspire to be doctors, nurses, lawyers, scientists, astronauts, teachers and preachers. They were the ones who through their political will and committed efforts obtained DACA. No one did it for them though many supported them then and support them today, including myself. They are determined to grow and learn, care for their families, contribute to their communities, and make a difference in the world. I believe they will do great things that will benefit all of us if we will continue to support them.

As a Christian, I believe that the welfare of immigrants, and particularly immigrant children and young people, stands above broken immigration policies and certainly above partisan politics. Jesus himself time and again demonstrates through his actions the importance of children, healing them, welcoming them into his presence and declaring that God's kingdom belongs to the children.

On the contrary, those advocating for doing away with DACA demonstrate the kind of hate politics that would not only hurt immigrant children and young people, but would also contribute to the shaping of a culture of prejudice and discrimination that would hurt all children and undermine the culture of our country, a culture of respect and acceptance of the other.

Let's teach the children of this country the values of respect, and acceptance, and the belief that all children are of equal worth. Maintaining DACA and strengthening it can contribute to this lesson.

Minerva G. Carcan~o is the resident bishop of the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church which is comprised of 370 congregations with 73,000 congregants in Northern Nevada and Northern California. Ninety-nine of the 370 congregations are located in Northern Nevada.

3 Californias possible in latest state-splitting plan

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

California secession efforts are plentiful this year, but tech billionaire Tim Draper wants to go old school: Just split the Golden State into three.

Draper spent more than \$5 million in 2014 on an unsuccessful effort to qualify a ballot measure asking voters to divide California into six states. He never gave up on the idea, though.

His newest measure, filed this month, says the “political representation of California’s diverse population and economies has rendered the state nearly ungovernable.

Read the whole story

Calif. safe drinking water tax proposed

By Katy Murphy, Bay Area News Group

For the first time Californians would pay a tax on drinking water – 95 cents per month – under legislation aimed at fixing hundreds of public water systems with unsafe tap water.

Senate Bill 623, backed by a strange-bedfellows coalition of the agricultural lobby and environmental groups but opposed by water districts, would generate \$2 billion over the next 15 years to clean up contaminated groundwater and improve faulty water systems and wells. The problem is most pervasive in rural areas with agricultural runoff.

Ironically, many Californians are more aware of the crisis in Flint – where state and local officials in 2015 told residents about lead contamination in the drinking water, after claiming it was safe to drink – than about the water problems in their home state, said the measure's main author, Sen. Bill Monning, D-Monterey.

Read the whole story

Best band, chicken wing competition at Squaw

This September, the Village at Squaw Valley will host a battle of epic proportions—Guitar Strings vs. Chicken Wings—with five restaurants and five bands facing off for the ultimate supremacy for best wings and best band.

On Sept. 15 from 4-9:30pm each restaurant will be cooking its signature recipes for spicy, flavor-packed chicken wings and joining forces with the region's best bands.

All proceeds benefit the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing the natural history, conservation and ecosystem knowledge of the Tahoe region through science, education and outreach. Last year, Guitar Strings vs. Chicken Wings raised nearly \$5,000 for TINS.

Participating restaurants include Auld Dubliner, Fireside Pizza, Rocker@Squaw, Twenty Two Bistro and new this year, the chefs from High Camp at Squaw Valley. This year's bands will include Truckee Tribe, The Connor Party, The Beergardeners, Ostricized and Chi McClean.

There is a \$5 entry donation. The donation gains access to special pricing of four wings for \$5, group package pricing on wings, drinks specials at the restaurants in the village and entry into a raffle.

Nevada earns D on health-care report card

By Paul Harasim, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A nonprofit created by heavy hitters from Nevada's business and medical communities gave the state a D grade on its first report card on the state's health-care system.

The report card was released Wednesday by the Nevada Medical Center, or NMC, and is intended to focus attention on improving access to quality health care in the state.

Larry Matheis, the NMC's CEO, said the report card will help state leaders focus on the gaps that must be filled to improve Nevada's medical standing. Currently, he said, the state's medical system "resembles a series of isolated communities ... due to the lack of collaboration among medical professionals and the dearth of thought given to enhancing our community's reputation."

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- TedX South Lake Tahoe is Sept. 29 at 5:30pm at Lake Tahoe Community College's Duke Theater. Doors open at 3:30pm. The \$55 tickets are available **online**.
- Two-time magician of the year Jonathan Neil will be at The Loft in South Lake Tahoe from Sept. 7-19.
- Mike Reid has been hired to be vice president of Finance and Administration at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.
- Lake Tahoe will be featured in "Fire Chasers," a Netflix original docudrama coming out in September.
- Turtle Park will be playing a benefit concert Aug. 26 for the South Tahoe Cancer League. Doors at the American Legion Hall in South Lake Tahoe open at 9pm, with show from 10pm-midnight. Cost is \$10.

Golf tourney to benefit STHS football

A golf tournament to raise money for South Tahoe High School's football team will be Sept. 30 at Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers.

Registration begins at 8am, with a shotgun start at 9am.

Cost is \$100 per person. For more information, email stvquarterbackclub@hotmail.com.

EV trips to Lake Tahoe just got easier

By Louis Hansen, Bay Area News Group

A pilot project is making an electric vehicle road trip in Northern California a little cheaper, easier and with a little less range anxiety.

A fast-charging network, known as Drive the ARC, is bringing more than 50 new electric stations installed at about 25 sites from Monterey to Lake Tahoe.

The network – free to EV drivers with a smart phone app and a common charger, is an international, public-private collaboration aimed at supporting the spread of zero emission vehicles. Many sites are open, and the network is slated for completion this fall.

[Read the whole story](#)

Truckee campground issues

plague warning

Campers at Martis Creek Lake Alpine Meadows Campground near Truckee are being warned to take precautions to avoid contracting plague.

The Army Corps of Engineers put up warning signs this week as well as insecticide treated bait stations. The goal is to kill the fleas that can carry the disease.

Plague is naturally present throughout California.

Tips to avoid contracting the plague:

- Do not feed any wild animal.
- Do not touch sick, injured or dead rodents.
- Do not camp, sleep or rest near animal burrows or areas where dead rodents are observed.
- Wear long pants tucked into boot tops and spray insect repellent with DEET on socks and pant cuffs to reduce flea exposure.
- Don't allow pets to approach sick or dead rodents or rodent burrows.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report