

Vacation searches up, signaling strong economy

By Fred Imbert, CNBC

The U.S. economy seems to be on solid footing, according to one unusual indicator: vacation searches on the internet.

Google searches for the term “vacation” rose 10 percent in April on a year-over-year basis, said Nicholas Colas, co-founder of DataTrek Research, using Google Trends data.

This is positive for the U.S. economy, Colas said, as U.S. workers are usually reluctant to take time off from work.

Read the whole story

Letter: Stop harassing VHR renters

Publisher's note: *This letter was originally sent to South Lake Tahoe enforcement, chief of police, City Council, and city manager, and then to Lake Tahoe News.*

Dear VHR Enforcement Team,

We are in receipt of a fourth “Advisory – Vacation Home Rental Complaint” since the city’s wonderful and effective ordinance which brought South Lake Tahoe national publicity. All four of these complaints were unverified.



Jim Morris

We appreciate any efforts that the city performs in trying to minimize the potential fining of our tenants, but if they cannot verify the complaints of the Nazi-neighbors, we prefer that you have no contact with our clients as the city has done enough damage to our industry that we have been building up for over 35 years. If there is no substantiation of the complaint, please remove yourselves from the area and do not disturb our guests.

If you want to be effective, go knock on the door of the complainant and warn them that filing a false complaint may subject them to a city fine as well as litigation by yours truly. You need to tell the complainant that the enforcement team does not appreciate unverified complaints.

We are the owners of 426 Emerald Drive and contributors to city TOT revenue of \$187,000 over a 17-year period without a VHR violation. Not to speak of the over 5,100 guests to our city spending money in grocery stores, restaurants, ski resorts, marinas, gas stations, retail stores, etc.

We are the owners of Lake Tahoe Accommodations and we don't want any of our guests disturbed in any of our vacation rentals in the city. What is more important, to satisfy the overly sensitive neighbor, or to bring 5,100 guests, families and children, to one of the most beautiful places in the world?

Jim and Melinda Morris

P.S. Does the City Council and the city management understand

what you are doing to one of the most productive industries in the South Shore?

California's \$4 billion plan to get people outside

By Jake Bullinger, Outside

The phrase “the great outdoors” evokes certain landscapes: towering spires, roiling cascades, undisturbed deserts. Yosemite, Moab, Acadia, and the like. These are places diverse in flora, fauna, and geology, but the outdoor spaces Americans cherish and have accordingly preserved often share one trait: For most people, they're hard to visit.

“We're increasingly urban as a population,” says Rue Mapp, founder of Outdoor Afro, an organization bent on getting more black people outside. “We have to imagine conservation that doesn't look like the more traditional viewpoints.”

In June, California will have a chance to shift the state's policy in that direction. If voters approve Proposition 68, the state will dedicate \$1.3 billion to creating and maintaining parks in underserved communities, many of them low-income where residents are people of color.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The Tahoe Arts Alliance's inaugural art expo will be June 9 from noon-5pm at Black Bear Lodge on Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.
 - AdventureSmith Expeditions is moving from Tahoe City to Truckee in June.
 - Za's restaurant plans to move into the lakefront Tahoe City location where Moe's BBQ used to be.
 - Mystic Roots Band, plus JRas and the Higher Elevation and Bukue One will be at Blu Nightclub in Stateline on June 16. Doors open at 10pm. Must be at least 21 to attend. Advance tickets are \$15; day of show are \$17.
 - Larry the Cable Guy will be at MontBleu in Stateline on July 14. Doors open at 7pm, show at 8pm. Must be at least 21 to attend.
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Mayors are advancing climate-friendly policies

By Nicolas Gunkel, The Conversation

Leadership in addressing climate change in the United States has shifted away from Washington, D.C. Cities across the country are organizing, networking and sharing resources to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and tackle related challenges ranging from air pollution to heat island effects.

But group photos at climate change summits typically feature

big-city Democratic mayors rubbing shoulders. Republicans are rarer, with a few notable exceptions, such as Kevin Faulconer of San Diego and James Brainard of Carmel, Ind.

Faulconer co-chairs the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100 Percent Clean Energy Initiative, which rallies mayors around a shared commitment to power their cities entirely with clean and renewable energy. Brainard is a longtime champion of the issue within the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Climate Mayors network.

In our research at the Boston University Initiative on Cities, we found that large-city Republican mayors shy away from climate network memberships and their associated framing of the problem. But in many cases they advocate locally for policies that help advance climate goals for other reasons, such as fiscal responsibility and public health. In short, the United States is making progress on this issue in some surprising places.

Climate network members are mainly Democrats

In our initiative's recent report, "Cities Joining Ranks," we systematically reviewed which U.S. cities belong to 10 prominent city climate networks. These networks, often founded by mayors themselves, provide platforms to exchange information, advocate for urban priorities and strengthen city governments' technical capacities.

The networks we assessed included Climate Mayors; We Are Still In, which represents organizations that continue to support action to meet the targets in the Paris climate agreement; and ICLEI USA.

We found a clear partisan divide between Republican and Democrat mayors. On average, Republican-led cities with more than 75,000 residents belong to less than one climate network. In contrast, cities with Democratic mayors belonged to an average of four networks. Among the 100 largest U.S. cities,

of which 29 have Republican mayors and 63 have Democrats, Democrat-led cities are more than four times more likely to belong to at least one climate network.

This split has implications for city-level climate action. Joining these networks sends a very public signal to constituents about the importance of safeguarding the environment, transitioning to cleaner forms of energy and addressing climate change. Some networks require cities to plan for or implement specific greenhouse gas reduction targets and report on their progress, which means that mayors can be held accountable.

Constituents in Republican-led cities support climate policies

Cities can also reduce their carbon footprints and stay under the radar – a strategy that is popular with Republican mayors. Taking the findings of the “Cities Joining Ranks” report as a starting point, I explored support for climate policies in Republican-led cities and the level of ambition and transparency in their climate plans.

To tackle these questions, I cross-referenced Republican-led cities with data from the Yale Climate Opinion maps, which provide insight into county-level support for four climate policies:

- Regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant
- Imposing strict carbon dioxide emission limits on existing coal-fired power plants
- Funding research into renewable energy sources
- Requiring utilities to produce 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources.

In all of the 10 largest U.S. cities that have Republican mayors and also voted Republican in the 2008 presidential election, county-level polling data showed majority support for all four climate policies. Examples included Jacksonville, Fla., and Fort Worth, Texas. None of these cities participated

in any of the 10 climate networks that we reviewed in our report.

This finding suggests that popular support exists for action on climate change, and that residents of these cities who advocate acting could lobby their elected officials to join climate networks. Indeed, we have found that one of the top three reasons mayors join city policy networks is because it signals their priorities. A mayor of a medium-sized West Coast city told us: “Your constituents are expecting you to represent them, so we are trying politically to be their voice.”

Climate-friendly strategies, but few emissions targets

Next I reviewed planning documents from the 29 largest U.S. cities that are led by Republican mayors. Among this group, 15 have developed or are developing concrete goals that guide their efforts to improve local environmental quality. Many of these actions reduce cities’ carbon footprints, although they are not primarily framed that way.

Rather, these cities most frequently cast targets for achieving energy savings and curbing local air pollution as part of their master plans. Some package them as part of dedicated sustainability strategies.

These agendas often evoke images of disrupted ecosystems that need to be conserved, or that endanger human health and quality of life. Some also spotlight cost savings from designing infrastructure to cope with more extreme weather events.

In contrast, only seven cities in this group had developed quantitative greenhouse gas reduction targets. Except for Miami, all of them are in California, which requires its cities to align their greenhouse gas reduction targets with state plans. From planning documents it appears that none of the six Californian cities goes far beyond minimum mandated

emission reductions set by the state for 2020.

Watch what they do, not what they say

The real measure of Republican mayors taking action on climate change is not the number of networks they join but the policy steps they take, often quietly, at home. While few Republican mayors may attend the next round of sub-national climate summits, many have set out policy agendas that mitigate climate change, without calling a lot of attention to it – much like a number of rural U.S. communities. Focusing narrowly on policy labels and public commitments by mayors fails to capture the various forms of local climate action, especially in GOP-led cities.

Carmel, Ind., Mayor James Brainard has suggested that some of his less-outspoken counterparts may fear a backlash from conservative opinion-makers. “There is a lot of Republicans out there that think like I do. They have been intimidated, to some extent, by the Tea Party and the conservative talk show hosts,” Brainard has said.

Indeed, studies show that the news environment has become increasingly polarized around accepting or denying climate science. Avoiding explicit mention of climate change is enabling a sizable number of big-city GOP mayors to pursue policies that advance climate goals.

Nicolas Gunkel is a research fellow at Boston University Initiative on Cities, Boston University.

Parents: Amtrak uses 'smear campaign'

By Sam Gross, Reno Gazette-Journal

The parents of 22-year-old Aaron Salazar, an Amtrak passenger found critically injured near train tracks over two weeks ago, called Amtrak Police's investigation a "smear campaign" by a "for-profit company," in a statement sent Wednesday morning to the *Reno Gazette Journal*.

The statement followed a Tuesday press conference held by Amtrak Chief of Police Neil Trugman where he told reporters that Salazar's injuries appear to be the result of an attempted suicide.

It's an assertion that Salazar's family fiercely disputes.

Read the whole story

Poets to take center stage at SLT Library

El Dorado County poet laureate Taylor Graham will be joined by local poets and Poetry Out Loud students for an evening of poetry readings and an open mic session on June 15 at the South Lake Tahoe Library.

Joining Graham at this final stop will be local poet, essayist, and travel writer from the South Lake Tahoe area, Suzanne Roberts. Roberts has been chosen as El Dorado County's next poet laureate.

Poetry Out Loud finalists will join the nomadic poets with recitations and original works to share with guests. An open mic session will finish up the evening, allowing some of the region's up and coming poets to spread their literary wings.

This event will be at the South Lake Tahoe Library at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. at 5:30 pm.

For more information, contact Caitlin Thompson at 530.295.3496 or caitlin@eldoradoartscouncil.org.

Tennis pro takes over Whittell High PE class



Dave Nostrant, right, instructs Whittell High students in the fundamentals of tennis. Photo/Ross Rittiman

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Physical education class isn't just running laps

or fulfilling some state mandate. For students in Emily Hunter's class at Whittell High School it's about learning skills that will last a lifetime.

For the past three weeks this group of freshmen and sophomores has been running from campus down to Zephyr Cove Tennis Club where head pro Dave Nostrant has been providing them with free instruction.

At first Hunter just wanted some court time, but Nostrant offered to coach the teens at no cost. He even provided rackets for them to use.

Nostrant said it took a bit of time for the kids to get interested in the sport, but as their skills improved, their enthusiasm level increased. Introducing more young people to tennis is something Nostrant has been trying to do since he took over the instruction at ZCTC a year ago.

"We've been able to do mini doubles where I hit a ball to a doubles pair and they play out the point," Nostrant said of the high school students.

Catalina Wilson was enjoying being outside and not stuck in the gym. While she has played before, she's not sure how much she'll play in the future because it takes a lot of work.

For Lydia Otterstron she liked learning all the strokes, with forehand her favorite because she said it was the easiest.

All are beginners even though a couple have been on a tennis court before. By the end of the class they will have been taught a forehand, backhand, volleys on both sides, and serve, as well a little bit about grips, the lines and different places on the court.

"I'm a big believer in lifetime sports," Hunter told *Lake Tahoe News* as she watched her students learn to serve. "When they leave my class they have skills. Tennis is something you

can do for the rest of your life.”

Missing PCT hiker found safe

By Jessica Johnson, Sacramento Bee

The reported missing hiker from Pacific Crest Trail, Stephen McGuire, 67, was located safe and in good health on Monday, according to park officials.

Winter storms delayed McGuire from progressing along his planned route

Read the whole story

Learn about fens at South Shore state park

Jerry Qualls, an internationally known wetlands expert, will lead a walk in Washoe Meadows State Park where he'll talk about fens.

Qualls is an associate professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Science at UNR.

Participants will find out:

- * What are fens?
- * How do they form over thousands of years?
- * Why are they significant to the health of Lake Tahoe?

* How are they under threat now?

Wear comfortable trail walking shoes and bring something to drink. The walk will take about two hours, with frequent stops for observation and learning. It will be on June 3 from 10am-noon.

RSVP to LCPaulson@comcast.net to get directions on where to meet.