

Calif. may extend last call by 2 hours

By Associated Press

Closing times at bars in California could go later if proposed legislation gets passed.

The bill proposed Tuesday by state Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat who represents San Francisco, would let municipalities set their own last call times. The *Los Angeles Times* reports communities could decide to go as late as 4am.

Currently, the last call time across the state is 2am.

Wiener's predecessor in the Legislature, former Sen. Mark Leno, tried in 2013 to give cities more flexibility in setting last call times. But his bill didn't get enough votes to move out of committee.

2016 Airbnb visits in Nevada top 340,000

By Associated Press

More than 340,000 people passed on Nevada's hotel rooms last year and opted instead to book a place to stay using the home-sharing service Airbnb.

The growth in the short term rental market is good for homeowners who made money from their residences, but it could be a drain on the state's all-important hospitality industry

and eventually drive down room rates, according to an industry expert.

Hosts in the state took in \$47 million, with most of the business centering in Las Vegas, figures released this week by the San Francisco-based company show. The number of guest arrivals represents a 151 percent year-over-year growth.

Las Vegas drew a record number of visitors for a third straight year in 2016, attracting 42.9 million tourists. People who opened their homes through Airbnb hosted more than a quarter of a million people and earned \$35.5 million.

Hosts in the Lake Tahoe communities of Stateline and Incline Village welcomed 18,400 and 17,100 guests, respectively.

Mehmet Erdem, an associate professor of hotel operations and technology at UNLV, said the growth of the home-sharing business is happening around the world, not just in Nevada. He said convenience and prices are among the factors that draw visitors to short-term rental services.

“For the people who come here for a bachelor’s party, they could book on Airbnb, but I would bet my money that they are going to stay at an integrated resort,” Erdem said. “But if I’m driving to Las Vegas for a soccer tournament and I try to make it a family vacation, I’ll probably check Airbnb.”

Airbnb is one of several companies that facilitate short-term rentals. Others include VRBO, Homestay and Wimdu.

Erdem said hoteliers could be affected by the home-sharing business if they are eventually forced to bring down their rates. And even with occupancy rates above 90 percent, Erdem said the hospitality industry in the state should keep an eye on services like Airbnb.

“It takes years and years to bring the rates back up,” he said.

Airbnb estimates a typical Nevada host earns \$6,600 annually. The company has collected \$500,000 in taxes in Washoe County since 2015.

Ryan Tussing has hosted dozens of Chinese tourists, a Super Bowl party, the filming of two adult movies and many other events and visitors since listing his Las Vegas home on Airbnb. He made \$17,000 in 2016 and hopes to make \$20,000 this year.

Tussing, whose home is about 10 miles away from the Las Vegas Strip, said he believes the success of the home-sharing business is because it is a more personal experience compared to a hotel stay.

“I show all my guests how to park for free on the Strip,” he said. “I treat you like you are my friend.”

In Las Vegas, regulations on short-term rental businesses include a business license requirement and an annual \$500 permit fee. Unincorporated Clark County – which includes properties near the Strip – does not allow short-term rentals in residential areas.

Businesswoman, entrepreneur to give talk at SNC

Nora Betyousef Lacy, founder of the biotech company Cell Marque and the nonprofit Assyrian Arts Institute, will be giving a free talk at Sierra Nevada College on Feb. 22 at 11:45am.

Lacy became an entrepreneur in 1994. After 25 years working in

biotechnology, she founded Cell Marque Corp., which specializes in cancer-detection products for pathology laboratories. She grew the company from an initial \$5,000 investment to a 100-employee company manufacturing immunohistochemistry diagnostic products for pathology labs worldwide, then sold it in 2014 to the multinational conglomerate Merck.

After the sale Nora focused on philanthropy. She established the nonprofit Nora Betyousef Foundation, leveraging her management expertise to encourage and mentor Assyrian entrepreneurs in starting their own businesses, and established the Assyrian Arts Institute.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Tahoe Donner Association will be before the Truckee Planning Commission on Feb. 21 at 6pm requesting approval of a five-year trail implementation plan consisting of 22 individual trail projects designed to enhance Tahoe Donner's existing trail network and improve environmental conditions.
- South Lake Tahoe Wedding & Honeymoon Association's annual Something Blue Wedding Expo is March 12 at MontBleu from 11am-3pm. Tickets are available **online**.
- Lake Tahoe Community College's board of trustees on Feb. 14 unanimously passed a resolution supporting undocumented students and the benefits of diversity on campus.
- The Joint Commission recognized Barton Memorial Hospital's capnography program for Best Clinical Application. Of 60 abstracts submitted, Barton received one of three national awards.

• Verde Mexican Rotisserie in Meyers is opening a second location at the Y in South Lake Tahoe this spring.

Charter has no clue when service will be back

Updated 2:18pm:

For those using Charter Internet, cable and phone services they know they are out of luck right now.

Calling the company doesn't provide much information.

"We don't get an estimated time when it will be fixed because most of the time we don't know what caused it," a Charter representative told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Feb. 17 outage is affecting Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley.

"A traffic accident has caused damage to our fiber-optic network and is impacting service for Charter customers in the South Lake Tahoe and Gardnerville areas. Crews are working to repair the damage and restore services as quickly as possible," Bret Picciolo, spokesman for Charter, told Lake Tahoe News.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Hillsides are 'weeping,' falling on Calif. highways

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

As the rain and snow have fallen this winter, so have California's hillsides, forcing the closure of major roads through the Sierra Nevada and causing millions of dollars in damage.

The California Department of Transportation estimates that the winter's pounding storms have caused \$400 million in damage to California highways. And the worst may still be coming.

Caltrans officials said they hope to keep Interstate 80 and Highway 50 open throughout Presidents Day weekend, but travelers should be aware the door could shut at any moment as a series of storms dumps more rain on already saturated mountainsides.

[Read the whole story](#)

Youth threatens to shoot up DC school in valley

A Douglas County 12-year-old was arrested Thursday night on charges of harassment and threatening to use a firearm at a school. He was turned over to Douglas County Juvenile Probation authorities.

The sheriff's department at about 7pm Feb. 16 received a report that a male juvenile had made threats that he intended

to bring a gun to Carson Valley Middle School on Feb. 17 to “shoot up the school.”

Deputies traced the phone threat to a residence in Chichester Estates. Investigators said the juvenile admitted to sending the message, but claimed he was not serious.

The weapons recovered at the suspect residence were a BB gun and two knives. There was no evidence the juvenile ever had a firearm or access to firearms, deputies said.

Investigators said there is no evidence or information to indicate any other threat or danger exists. Classes were not interrupted.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Feeding wildlife is not a good idea

By Aaron Meier

For those who keep tabs on Nevada’s wildlife, a frequently asked question during periods of heavy snowfall is “should we feed wildlife when winter limits their food availability?”

Idaho, Colorado and Utah have recently initiated limited amounts of winter feeding and “baiting” of mule deer and elk. These efforts are intended to prevent agricultural damage and provide for human safety on highways and interstates as animals are lured away from conflict areas. Although snowfall has been plentiful in many parts of Nevada this winter, rainfall and warmer daytime temperatures have minimized snow accumulations at lower elevations. Most mule deer, elk and

pronghorn continue to have access to lower elevation winter ranges that assist in avoiding deep snows and locating suitable forage. Yet, even when winter conditions are most severe, winter feeding may not be a good idea.

“Feeding wildlife often feels like the right thing to do,” said Cody Schroeder, mule deer biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife. “Yet in practice, it generally creates more problems than it solves.”

Schroeder is part of the Mule Deer Working Group, a subcommittee of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The group has been reviewing scientific literature on a number of issues facing deer in the West and prepared a fact sheet on the challenges of winter feeding. **Those challenges include:**

Diet: Mule deer and pronghorn are highly selective foragers. They tend to eat plant parts with the highest nutrient content. These animals are also ruminants, meaning they have a four-compartment stomach and get nutrients from plant-based food by fermenting it in a specialized stomach prior to digestion. Rapid changes in their diet may result in the inability to digest their food. Some past efforts at supplemental feeding have failed when these animals died with full stomachs due to this rapid change.

Behavior: Many ungulates (deer, elk, antelope) are migratory in nature and respond to heavy winter conditions by moving to areas with less snow accumulation. Feeding may entice migratory animals to stay in one place when the best solution may be for them to move on.

Disease: Winter feeding concentrates wildlife and can lead to disease transmission among individuals. Sometimes the feed the animals consume may actually cause certain diseases, such as grain toxicosis.

Predation: Concentrating animals in a single location can also

concentrate the animals that prey on them as well. While reducing herd size under severe conditions may limit the numbers of animals dependent on a limited food source, concentrated numbers can result in greater predation than what they would normally sustain.

Competition: When wildlife is concentrated, competition for food resources may be severe and young animals may be excluded from foraging. Young animals are among the least capable of surviving difficult conditions, and concentrated numbers can increase competition to the point that fawn survival may decrease beyond what may be experienced without the winter feeding. These concentrations may also result in increased damage to native rangelands beyond what would normally occur if animals were spread out.

Finances and logistics: To feed wildlife effectively, specific foods should be prepared that address the specialized needs of ruminant animals. Formulation and production takes time and this formulated feed is relatively expensive. Delivering the feed to the best locations can be challenging because creating concentrations near easily accessed roads can create traffic hazards or lead to increased poaching events.

NDOW also wants the public to be aware that heavy snow may sometimes lead to wildlife coming into urban areas in search of food, but that it is never a good idea for the public to feed wildlife.

“We understand that when you see an animal that looks hungry, a person’s first instinct is to feed that animal. We just want the public to understand that feeding a wild animal is often unhealthy for the animal and it takes away their fear of people,” said Schroeder.

Aaron Meier is with the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Truckee art exhibit to feature veterans

Image Nation, an art installation featuring Nevada County veterans, comes to the Truckee Community Recreation Center on March 10.

The photographs – self-portraits and pictures of veterans' hands, are the result of a therapeutic workshop with veteran and master photographer Michael Llewellyn.

The gallery will hang in the Community Recreation Center through June.

Along with the artistic value of the collection, Image Nation helps veterans express themselves and connect with each other and society, a key element in treating post traumatic stress disorder.

Llewellyn will attend the exhibit opening on March 10 from 5-7pm, and will host a series of nine veteran photography workshops in 2017.

For more information, email michael@michaelllewellyn.com.

Higher lodging fee to fund

Stateline event center



Edgewood Lodge once completed will add to Douglas County's bed tax revenue. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It is going to cost a little more to stay at a Stateline lodging property beginning May 1.

Douglas County commissioners on Feb. 16 agreed to increase the lodging license fee from 3 percent to 4 percent just for properties at the lake. The additional revenue will be for the sole purpose of planning, building and maintaining an events center.

Because this is a fee and not a tax it does not need to go before voters. It will bring the total hotel tax to 14 percent. This is the same rate tourists pay in the redevelopment area of South Lake Tahoe.

Based on last year's lodging revenues, an additional 1 percent would have brought in \$600,000. With the Edgewood Lodge

expected to open in late spring, that will be additional revenue that has not been part of the mix.

The added fee will affect all short-term rentals, not just traditional hotels.

Since 2010 an effort has been under way to create a year-round event center. The goal is to be able to attract conventions that are too big for the casinos, bring in entertainment year-round, and have indoor athletic events.

The current proposal is for the event center to be built at the corner of Highway 50 and Lake Parkway in MontBleu's parking lot.

Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority would own and operate the facility.

TDVA in October approved the lodging fee. That entity is responsible for spending the lodging fees and taxes collected by the county at the lake. The money is for tourism – including helping fund Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, putting on the two fireworks shows on the South Shore, contributing to the celebrity golf tournament, outdoor concert series and other events.

At Thursday's meeting the 11 people who spoke were all in favor of the proposal, including reps from LTVA, Harrah's-Harveys, MontBleu, Ridge Tahoe, and Edgewood Tahoe.

This was the first reading of the ordinance, with one more to come. Then a business impact statement will be prepared.

Assuming those get approved, then TDVA will go forward with environmental documents and all associated studies. That process could take two years.