

California considers an end to bail

By Alexei Koseff, Sacramento Bee

On any given day, most inmates in California jails have not yet been convicted of a crime.

About 63 percent are being held awaiting trial, according to data collected by the Board of State and Community Corrections, an average of nearly 47,000 people. Federal statistics on the largest urban counties show that from 2000 to 2009, California kept unsentenced felony defendants in jail at nearly twice the rate of the rest of the country.

For state Sen. Bob Hertzberg, the problem is clear: Bail is “just too expensive.” The median amount in the state is \$50,000, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, five times higher than the national average.

[Read the whole story](#)

Star Guide: Defining your cosmos

By Tony Berendsen

What's your Cosmos?

“Cosmos often simply means ‘universe.’ But the word is generally used to suggest an orderly or harmonious universe, as it was originally used by Pythagoras in the 6th century

B.C.” – Webster’s dictionary.

All of us are traveling together on this planet orbiting a star once a year within the Milky Way galaxy. Our planet is small, the Earth is only one-millionth of the size of our star, and although one yearly orbit seems like a long period of time for us, it is a wink of the eye in time compared to the orbital period of our star around the galaxy; about 250 million years.

Each of us experience life uniquely, and so all of us interpret the cosmos differently.



Hubble’s 25th anniversary image of the Westerlund 2 Cluster. Photo/NASA

This week I asked a couple people at the UNR about their cosmos:

Dan Ruby, director of the Fleischmann Planetarium, said, “Space is unimaginably big, containing more than we can comprehend. As our knowledge of the cosmos grows, our share of understanding shrinks. Thinking about our place in space

doesn't make me feel small or insignificant; in fact, the opposite is true—studying the vast universe beyond the thin envelope of Earth's atmosphere makes me feel like an integral part of it, and I'm excited about the prospect of having a lifetime of new things to learn."

Nasim Emadi, student of mechanical engineering at UNR: "The cosmos is where we live in the large scale, but I am concerned about my day-to-day life here on earth, I don't think about the cosmos very much."

Those are two very contrasting statements about the cosmos. Our sense of place in the cosmos is affected by the many aspects of our lives; how and where we were educated, our religion, our culture, our family values, even significant moments in our lives.

How do you define your part in the cosmos?

In the next Star Guide I will feature 10 statements of "What is your Cosmos" from the readers of Star Guide. If you would like to have your perception of the cosmos published in the article, please send a short statement (one or two sentences only, with your full name and occupation) to tony@tahoestartours.com.

In return, I'll include my perception of the cosmos in step with the words of contemporary poet Galway Kinnell who was quoted, "To me, poetry is somebody standing up, so to speak, and saying, with as little concealment as possible, what it is for him or her to be on earth at this moment."

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775.232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Reno airport passenger, cargo numbers surge

Reno-Tahoe International Airport in 2016 had the highest year-over-year increase in passengers since 2004.

Last year 3,650,830 passengers used the airport, a 6.4 percent increase from 2015.

Additional flights and improved economy helped spur the growth.

This is the main airport for people traveling to Lake Tahoe and Truckee.

2016 was the best year for cargo, with 156,410,910 pounds processed.

“The positive impact of major warehousing, e-commerce and distribution facilities in the region cannot be understated. While boosting the local economy, these facilities also increase air cargo growth at RNO,” President-CEO Marily Mora said in a statement. “As our region continues to grow and diversify, we expect to continue to see strong air cargo lift at Reno-Tahoe International.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Retiree obligations have

stranglehold on LTUSD

CalSTRS & Cal PERS Increases

Year	STRS Increase	Increase Amount	PERS Increase	Increase Amount
2016-17	1.85%	\$371,318	2.041%	\$133,254
2017-18	1.85%	\$361,962	1.912%	\$127,732
2018-19	1.85%	\$369,229	2.9%	\$198,239
2019-20	1.85%	\$372,504	2.9%	\$203,988
2020-21	1.85%	\$375,944	3.3%	\$237,273
Total Increases through 2020-21	9.25%	\$1,850,957	13.053%	\$900,486

Source: *LTUSD*

By Kathryn Reed

Skyrocketing retirement costs are impacting Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

“It’s a half million-dollar hit. We will not be able to keep it going,” Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of the shift in CalSTRS and CalPERS allocations.

Certificated employees pay into the California State Teachers Retirement System, while classified staff are part of the California Public Employment Retirement System.

Billy Wessell, chief business and operations officer for LTUSD, gave a presentation last week to the board about what the governor’s budget proposal will mean locally.

“He really didn’t help us out in his budget,” Wessell said of Gov. Jerry Brown. He called the PERS/STRS situation “scary.”

LTUSD is contributing 12.58 percent to STRS this fiscal year.

It's proposed to go up to 14.43 percent for 2017-18. Today the PERS contribution is 13.888 percent. Next year it is projected to be 15.8 percent.

These percentages are of an employee's salary that local taxpayers put into the worker's retirement account. Those workers get a defined amount of money for life when they retire and have stopped contributing in any way to the district.

When investments by PERS and STRS don't keep up with what those agencies have to pay retirees it is then up to member agencies via the taxpayers in those jurisdictions to come up with the shortfall.

Five years of increases for retiree benefits through 2020-21 is expected to cost LTUSD an additional \$2,751,443.

McClintock exits with police escort after raucous town hall

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

Facing a packed auditorium and raucous crowd, Republican Rep. Tom McClintock on Saturday defended his party's national agenda and voiced strong support for President Trump's controversial executive actions to scale back Obamacare, ban visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries and build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Vote him out," hundreds of demonstrators chanted outside the Tower Theatre in downtown Roseville, the Republican-heavy

population center of McClintock's sprawling congressional district, which includes the California side of Lake Tahoe. Inside the theater, more than 200 people gathered for a town-hall event hosted by McClintock.

Attendees, some carrying signs that read "Resist," "Dump Tom McTrump" and "Climate change is real," pressed McClintock to denounce Republican plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act, acknowledge the science supporting the human causes of climate change, and oppose Trump's executive order temporarily restricting refugee admissions to the U.S.

Read the whole story

Rangers to lead hikes at Washoe Lake

Rangers are leading two hikes at Washoe Lake State Park this month

The full moon hike will be Feb. 11 from 6-7:30pm. It is a moderate 1.5-mile hike to the gazebo on the Deadman's Creek Trail. Reservations are required; call 775.687.4319 or email washoelake@hdiss.net. The hike is free after the park's entrance fee of \$7 per vehicle. Nevada residents receive a \$2 discount.

The sand dunes hike is a moderate three-miler on Feb. 19 from 1-3pm. Meet at the Equestrian Pavilion. This event is free after the park's entrance fee of \$7/vehicle.

LTWC returns three bears to Yosemite



Wildlife officials ready the bears for their return to the wild. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

If only these cubs could talk. What would they say about the treatment they received for nearly seven months at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care? Do they remember their mom being hit by a car last summer in Yosemite?

No more being poked and prodded by needles. That has to be a

good thing. But no more watermelon either. They will have to forage for every meal.



Tom Millham with Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care puts ointment in one of the bear's eyes. Photo/Kathryn Reed

While LTWC has 99 percent of all animals' diets be natural, it isn't always what they'd find in the wild. Watermelon and grapes are two things almost all critters like. These bears were fed a lot of fish, but kokanee isn't something they'll find in Yosemite.

For now, the three Yosemite cubs that came in at 8, 8 and 10 pounds are back in the national park. They left the South Shore animal rehab facility last week weighing 62.9, 80.4 and 94.5 pounds.

"They are at a better weight than we had hoped for," Tom Millham told *Lake Tahoe News*. He and his wife, Cheryl, are the

founders of LTWC.



The size of the bears' paws have grown substantially since their arrival to Tahoe in July. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On this particular day a bevy of activity is going on. Veterinarian Kevin Willitts is taking blood and performing one last exam on these bruins. Three Yosemite officials are doing what's needed to ensure the bears have a restful ride back to the park. They take hair samples, measurements, weight, make sure that their collars fit just right and that all the paperwork is in order.

Normally only bears weighing more than 100 bears receive GPS collars. This is the only study beyond the one on the East Coast where bears weighing less than that minimum are being

tracked. The collars are programmed to come off six months from the day they were put on.



GPS collars will provide national parks officials with data on the bears. Photo/Kathryn Reed

As with all animals brought to LTWC, the goal is to return them to the area they came from. Because the bears are going into a wilderness area, it required teams of men and women on skis to haul the animals to their den on separate sleds. The goal is they will sleep together the rest of the winter and then wakeup in their old/new home. For their safety, the exact location is not being disclosed.

The collar will tell researchers if the two males and one female travel the same or different distances, if they stick together, who comes out first and a slew of other data.



South Lake Tahoe vet Kevin Willitts is an integral component to LTWC animals returning to the wild.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

A website is expected to be launched in March that will provide information about the bears. It will regularly be updated about their activity. LTWC plans to have a link to it from its website.

Once the collars come off they will be retrieved, refurbished and used again.

These were the last of the five bear cubs brought to LTWC in 2016 to be released. Another bear that arrived earlier this year will stay in Tahoe through the winter.

Opinion: EDC supe succumbs to political pressure

By Larry Weitzman

In less than a week after the *Lake Tahoe News* published two articles that heavily rebuked the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors for voting 5-0 at their last BOS meeting on Jan. 24 to write a letter of support for new state legislation (SB1 and AB1) which would significantly increase gasoline taxes and vehicle registration fees, one BOS member has placed an item on next Tuesday's BOS agenda to rescind his action.



Larry Weitzman

Senate Bill 1, the legislation, by the legislative analyst's estimation would raise about \$7 billion annually in new tax revenue creating a per capita tax of about \$180 for every man, woman and child in California. Such an increase in taxes would cost EDC taxpayers anywhere from \$21 million to \$32 million annually. EDC would receive only \$10.1 million in additional road maintenance funding from that revenue.

Fourth District Supervisor Michael Ranalli evidently saw the errors of his ways in voting to support the tax increase and now pursuant to his request placed item No. 28 on the BOS agenda for the Feb. 7 meeting.

The item states, "Supervisor Ranalli, pursuant to County Ordinance Section 2.03.140: 1) Requests the Board reconsider

the Board's action on January 24, 2017, on File 17-0108, Agenda Item 38, authorizing the Chair to sign a letter of support to Senator Jim Beall in support of SB 1 and a letter of support to Assemblyman Jim Frazier in support of AB 1; and 2) If the Board votes to grant reconsideration of the action taken on File 17-0108, Supervisor Ranalli recommending the Board direct the Chief Administrative Office to schedule File 17-0108 as part of the February 14, 2017, Board meeting and to include information that will provide the Board and the public with a greater understanding of the projected impact of the potential tax and fee increases, as proposed within SB 1 and AB 1, on local businesses and residents."

When Ranalli's vote to raise taxes became so public he did try to explain his way out of it to a few county Republicans with what could be characterized as political double speak. Why would Ranalli do this? There is an election coming up in about a year and a half and voting to raise taxes in a county that votes 60 percent Republican and a district that is even heavier Republican could make Ranalli a one-term supervisor. There was nothing on the BOS calendar about directing the CAO to recommend meaningful spending cuts, just raising taxes and no suggestion by Ranalli to make cuts as well.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Best dog for the outdoors? The humble mutt

By Wes Siler, Outside

"The 20 Best Dog Breeds for Runners," "The 20 Best Active Dog Breeds," "The 10 Best Hot-Weather Dog Breeds," "The 10 Best

Cold Weather Dog Breeds,” “The Best Family Dogs,” “How to Pick the Perfect Dog for You”... I pulled all these article titles off the first page of a Google search for dog articles on *Outside*.

We’re far from the only publication to run a series of pieces like this. But the thing is, any advice telling you to choose a pure-bred dog as an outdoor companion is inherently wrong.

The best dog, for any person, doing any activity, is a mutt.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- El Dorado Winery Association is putting on two winemaker dinners – April 21 and April 28 – as part of the annual Passport event. They will be at Sienna restaurant in El Dorado Hills. More info and tickets are available **online**.
- Meeks Bay Fire Protection District’s Station 61 has been upgraded from being staffed as a basic life support station to an advanced life support station. This means there will be a minimum of one captain and one paramedic on duty.
- Volunteers for Tahoe Institute for Natural Science’s annual mid-winter bald eagle count saw 27 eagles – 23 adults, two sub-adult, and two immatures.
- Children are invited to the Douglas County Public Library in Minden to make Valentines on Feb. 11 from 2-3pm. This for preschool and school aged kids. All craft supplies will be provided by the library.

· The Comstock History Center Museum in Virginia City is showcasing a landscape photography exhibit entitled "Sagebrush Visions: The photography of Will Barber" for free. The museum is open Thursdays and Fridays from 10am-4:30pm and Saturdays from 10am-5pm.