

Author to give talk, host workshop at SNC

Author Shaun Griffin will give a free talk Feb. 3 as part of the Writers in the Wood Series at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

A long-time resident of Virginia City, he has taught poetry workshops in the Northern Nevada Correctional Center and is co-founder of the Community Chest, a nonprofit agency serving children and families in Northwestern Nevada.

Griffin wrote "Anthem for a Burnished Land," "This is What the Desert Surrenders and Bathing in the River of Ashes," and was editor of "From Sorrow's Well," a volume on the poet Hayden Carruth, among other works.

The 7-9pm talk is free. Griffin will be putting on a workshop Feb. 4. To sign up, go **online**.

Caesars unit clears way to exit bankruptcy

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

Caesars Entertainment Corp's main operating unit has cleared the way for the casino operator to exit bankruptcy protection with an agreement that ends the last objection to its reorganization plan, lawyers told a U.S. judge on Friday.

The U.S. government's bankruptcy watchdog had objected to the reorganization of Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc, the subsidiary that filed an \$18 billion bankruptcy in 2015, because of legal protections for the non-bankrupt parent.

The objection by the U.S. Trustee was a cloud over next week's trial to approve the Caesars unit's plan to cut \$10 billion of debt and emerge from its two-year Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Read the whole story

Challenge to Prop. 66 by former EDC supervisor

By Kathryn Reed

Former El Dorado County Supervisor Ron Briggs wants the state Supreme Court to overturn Proposition 66, which voters narrowly approved in November.

"Prop. 66 is a sloppily written document, failing several constitutional tests," Briggs told *Lake Tahoe News*. "... from firsthand experiences we know it takes approximately 17 years post penalty phase to work toward exoneration."

The end goal for him is to have the court deem Proposition 66 unconstitutional.

The intent of the prosecutors who wrote Proposition 66 was for the state Supreme Court to rule on death penalty appeals within five years of sentencing. Today it usually takes 10 years or longer for that to occur.

Briggs said changing the "appeals process creates a system

ripe for executing the wrong person. If the state is going to execute condemned persons, it must be perfect. Rushing anything is fraught with errors.”

Briggs filed the challenge with former Attorney General John Van de Kamp.

It was Briggs’ father, John Briggs, who as a state senator in 1978 sponsored the state’s current death penalty law.

In a July 2016 column in the *Sacramento Bee*, Ron Briggs wrote, “Though I was once California’s biggest proponent of the death penalty, I now feel compelled to admit the policy is destructive to our great state. What we didn’t know then is that the death penalty would become an industry that benefits only attorneys and criminals, and no one else. It’s an extreme expense to taxpayers, does not make our communities safer and fails to deliver the justice it promised.”

Briggs used a local case as an example of how the system is flawed. Joseph Nissensohn, 64, was sentenced to death June 5, 2014, for the murder of a South Lake Tahoe teenager and two others.

“That case cost El Dorado County \$3.1 million to send a (then) 62-year-old man to Death Row. The \$3.1 million came out of our General Fund that pays for libraries, roads, sheriff, mental health, senior services and on,” Brigg said. “At the time in 2013 the \$3.1 million represented two-thirds of the county’s total contingency. And for what purpose? The average appellate time is 24 years post penalty phase. Life without parole would have cost the county about \$750,000 and had the same effect in sending that monster away forever. Instead, he now has three appeals pending with two full-time attorneys along with a special care status instead of being in general population. This puts the victims’ families in a legal hell as they are now subjected to living with Nissensohn, almost forever or until his death, whichever comes first.”

In Briggs' challenge to Proposition 66 he contends the new law will be a greater financial burden to taxpayers.

Briggs told *LTN* that because the proposition keeps the appeals in the trial court it eliminates the appellate and Supreme Court from entering the appeals process. "This is in conflict with the Constitution that vests jurisdiction within all courts in any legal proceeding. This means if you or I are condemned, our appeals are kept with the trial court who, in a Prop. 66 world, is charged in reviewing their own proceedings to discover any wrong steps. I do not know about you; I want a separate set of eyes reviewing, not the judge who made the decisions."

Briggs and Van de Kamp also take issue with the proposition's giving unqualified attorneys death penalty appeals cases.

Opinion: Calif. wages not the problem; cost of housing is

By Kerry Cavanaugh, Los Angeles Times

California's new minimum wage increase is pushing some businesses out of the state, at least according to one clothing manufacturer, who plans to move his operation to Las Vegas. The state's base pay increased to \$10.50 on Jan. 1. It's the first in a series of hikes that will eventually set the minimum wage at \$15 an hour in 2022.

That is simply too much for some employers, particularly those who compete in a global marketplace, argued Housman Salem, chief executive of ARGYLE Haus of Apparel, which is based in San Fernando. In a recent op-ed, Salem laid out the math: He

currently pays his workers \$10.50 an hour, plus productivity bonuses. The planned wage increase to \$15 an hour in 2022, plus additional worker compensation and payroll taxes, will cost him just under \$40,000 a year per full-time employee.

His math makes a compelling case, but there's an equaling compelling reason why California had to raise the minimum wage: It's nearly impossible to live on so little income given the incredibly high cost of housing. A new report from the state's Housing and Community Development Department says that 1 in 3 Californians pays more than half his income for housing, with less to spend on transportation, education, healthcare or to put into savings. The burden of high housing costs falls especially hard on the lowest-paid workers.

Read the whole story

When city retirement pays better than the job

By Jack Dolan, Los Angeles Times

James Mussenden doesn't bring up his pension in casual conversation. No point getting his golf partners' blood boiling.

The retired city manager of El Monte collects more than \$216,000 a year, plus cost-of-living increases and fully paid health insurance.

"It's giving me an opportunity to do a number of things I didn't get to do when I was younger, like travel to Europe,

take some things off my bucket list,” Mussenden, 66, said recently. He even flew to Scotland to play the famed Old Course at St. Andrews, a mecca for golf enthusiasts.

Mussenden recognizes that few Americans have pensions anymore – least of all the El Monte taxpayers who are funding his retirement. So while he enjoys his monthly retirement check, he’s discreet about it.

“The guys I play golf with, they get very angry about my pension because they don’t have anything like it,” he said.

Actually, Mussenden has two pensions. He’s part of a coterie of former El Monte civil servants who receive one taxpayer-funded pension through the California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS) – and a second through a “supplemental” plan approved by the city council in 2000.

The extra pensions, along with other sweeteners granted to El Monte employees over the years, have created one of the heaviest public pension burdens of any city in California, a *Los Angeles Times* investigation found.

Read the whole story

Winter trails day in South Lake Tahoe rescheduled

Even though the skies on Jan. 14 will be clear, the trail will be nearly impassable even on snowshoes.

The means the South Shore winter trails day is being canceled. However, it has been rescheduled for Feb. 18.

With South Lake Tahoe, U.S. Forest Services and Lake Tahoe Unified School District offices having been shut down for most of the week, this created additional challenges getting Generation Green students prepared to lead the event.

The free guided snowshoe will be in Van Sickle Bi-state Park that day. It will be from 10am-1pm.

Register in advance by calling 530.542.6059 or email kedwards@cityofslt.us.

Vail Resorts reports slow start to the season

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

The slow start to the ski season did not help Vail Resorts. The Broomfield, Colo.-based resort operator reported Friday that early-season visitation to its nine North American mountain resorts and three urban hills was down more than 13 percent compared with the previous season.

By the end of December though, visitation was back on track with destination guests buoying flagging revenue with spending on lift tickets, passes, dining, rentals, lessons and retail shops.

Season-to-date lift ticket revenue at Vail Resorts' ski areas was up 4.3 percent through the first week of January compared with the same period last season. Rental revenue was down 2 percent. Ski school revenue was up 1.5 percent and dining revenue was down 6.4 percent.

[Read the whole story](#)

Placer makes it easier to open shelters

A change to change Placer County's zoning ordinance will allow more flexibility for temporary, emergency homeless shelter stays.

The change was approved by a 4-1 vote by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 10, with Supervisor Jim Holmes dissenting.

Supervisors want to move the current temporary shelter at the Placer County Government Center campus to a more suitable location as soon as possible.

Now shelters will be allowed in industrial, industrial park and heavy commercial areas. Shelters were already allowed in several types of commercial and multi-family residential areas. The change also adds new development standards for shelters, as well as concrete plans for neighborhood relations and security.

The goal is to have shelters as close as possible to social services, job service programs and grocery stores or close to transportation between the facility and services.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

West Shore power outage continues; roads icy



Power lines are drooping on Taylor Street in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 13 and at many locations in the basin. Photo/Susan Wood

Update 9:35pm:

Liberty Utilities restoration efforts continue throughout North and South shores.

Teams went into River Road by helicopter on Friday to assess the plan for getting crews in safely. A helicopter is coming in from Southern California early afternoon Saturday and will drop crews and equipment into the region to begin restoration that is expected to take several days. Snowcats and

snowmobiles will be used to get crews and equipment into Tahoe Pines on Saturday.

Tahoe City PUD is open until 5pm daily for residents to provide a warming center where residents can recharge phones, use WiFi, and warm up. They are not able to accept dogs. They can be contacted at 530.583.3705. The address 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

More than 2,000 homes on the West Shore were checked by a team of approximately 30 deputies, firefighters, paramedics and trained volunteers from various agencies. The goal was to assess the welfare of those who have been without power and may have potential challenges with access to services.

There were more than 50 reports of assistance, which included assessing infrastructure damage and downed power lines, personal property damage, and assisting citizens with egress.



Clouds still linger Jan. 13 after a week of storms in Tahoe. Photo/Denise Haerr

Update 4:20pm:

Due to ongoing power outages and damage caused by extreme winter conditions on the West Shore, a coordinated safety assessment operation is taking place.

Placer County Office of Emergency Services, Placer County Sheriff's Office, North Tahoe Fire Protection District, Meeks Bay Fire Protection District, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue, and NTFPD Community Emergency Response Team are working together.

Deputies, firefighters, paramedics and trained volunteers will be going door-to-door between Timberland and Tahoma to assess the health and welfare of residents in neighborhoods, especially elderly, mobility impaired and other at risk populations. They will also be assessing damage in the area.

Much of the area – 4,000 customers – has been without power since Jan. 8. The area has received 12 feet of snow.

Officials are asking friends and family to call 530.584.2301 if they have not heard from those known to be living in or visiting the affected area.

A warming center is open at the Tahoe City Public Utility District (221 Fairway Drive) for those residents who are unable to shelter in place. Transport will be available for those who need assistance accessing the shelter. An overnight shelter was operated at this location last night. Continued operation of the shelter for this evening is still being assessed.

With the use of helicopters, Liberty Utilities will attempt to make repairs to remote areas over the next several days as weather allows, but some customers in the River Road and Tahoe Pines areas should prepare for multiple day outages.

Liberty intends to try to reach people by phone in those areas to inform them of the progress.

Trees and branches are bound to continue to fall on wires and snap poles, causing problems for Liberty and NV Energy customers.

South Lake Tahoe customers may experience sporadic, short-term outages as crews re-energize lines. There are 200 customers on the South Shore without power. It should be restored by Sunday morning at the latest.

Homewood, Tahoma and Crystal Bay have mailbox service only, but there are no postal retail offerings until power is restored. Customers with home mail delivery are encouraged to clear mailboxes as soon as practical.

With a variety of winter weather conditions occurring across Nevada and Eastern California, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National

Forest is reminding visitors to be extra careful while recreating this winter.

Tips:

- Be aware of existing and impending weather conditions and check with the National Weather Service frequently for updates.
- Leave detailed trip plans with a person you trust.
- Do not rely on iPhones or map apps.

Caltrans crews have been focusing efforts Friday in South Lake Tahoe to get two lanes of traffic going in each direction.

Several accidents have been reported on area roads. Black ice has been a problem, along with snow and sand or other de-icing substances.

Highway 50 on the South Shore in Nevada was closed for several hours Friday while multiple wrecks were cleared.

A single vehicle rolled over on Highway 267 at 5:38am Jan. 13. The male driver in his early 20s sustained minor injuries.

Douglas County road staff have reached the maximum driving hours allowed per federal law. They are unable to return to regular duty until Jan. 17 at 7 am. If an emergency arises, staff may be called in after 5am on Sunday.

The storms brought 29 billion gallons of water to Lake Tahoe.



Ice is on roofs and the roads in Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

By Lake Tahoe News

Residents in the Tahoe Pines area on the West Shore (Barker Pass Road to Cherry Street) could be without power for several more days.

That area has heavy damage, with multiple poles down that requires helicopter repair. That work should start today. Liberty Utilities has restored power from Tahoe City South to Sugar Pine Road and Highway 89.

South Shore crews are deployed and working on six primary wires. Power should be back on by this afternoon.

South Lake Tahoe's City Council at the regular Jan. 17 meeting is expected to declare a state of emergency in regards to the storms that just rolled through.

The action would allow the city to seek funding from the state and federal governments to help pay for the costs associated

with dealing with the deluge of rain and snow.

Truckee, Douglas County and El Dorado County officials have all made the same declaration.

Incline Village schools are still closed, as is Tahoe Truckee Unified and Lake Tahoe Unified.

Traffic should be picking up as visitors come to the area for the long weekend. Crews will continue to clear snow as fast as they can. Highways could be closed at any time because wrecks, avalanche control or some other reason. Click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* for current road conditions.

Waste Management garbage customers in Incline Village who did not receive service Thursday will have trash picked up Saturday.

Squaw Valley's record snowfall for January came during the 1981-82 season with 175 inches. In the first 12 days of January 2017, the resort has received 101 percent of that accumulation.

This week's canceled Lake Tahoe Community College board of trustees meeting is rescheduled for Jan. 17 at 6:30pm.

Learn about transportation and technology

How can technology be used to improve the Lake Tahoe transportation system?

That will be the subject of a talk on Jan. 18 from noon-1:30pm

in the Creekside room at Lake Tahoe Community College.

A panel of experts will walk through new apps and technology being used at Lake Tahoe. Learn more about the new smart parking app, interactive bike path portal, and plans to upgrade daily drives.