

Truckee offering rebates for wood stoves

Truckee residents may receive a rebate for the removal of non-compliant solid fuel burning devices, including wood stoves and fireplace inserts.

The Truckee Town Council reinstated the program this summer. The council had previously allocated \$64,000 as part of the 2016-17 budget cycle from the town's air quality mitigation fund for the program.

The available rebates will be \$600 for replacement of a non-compliant solid fuel burning device with a Phase II EPA Certified wood stove or pellet stove, or \$1,000 for replacement of a non-compliant solid fuel burning device with natural gas service, for a maximum of \$1,600 per residential unit.

Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis and will expire once the funds have been exhausted.

For information, go **online**.

SLT wins portion of retiree health care case

By Kathryn Reed

City of South Lake Tahoe retirees have been denied monetary compensation from a lawsuit they filed last year over health benefits.

A group calling themselves the South Lake Tahoe Retirees Association filed the suit in December in U.S. District Court in Sacramento. Who is in this group has not been revealed.

However, the city does not have any contract with this group and has never knowingly met with anyone in the group.

For decades retirees have received the same health benefits as active employees. That's the agreement the city has with retirees. When the plan changed for workers, it changed for retirees. This policy worked until the city did a major overhaul in 2014.

The city created what it calls Plan A. It is a basic health plan that has a \$5,500 deductible. The city picks up the cost for singles, couples and families. Vision and dental are no longer offered. If people want a better plan, they can pay the difference for it. The deal also said those eligible for Medicare must apply for it.

The City Council also voted to stop paying for health coverage for future retirees.

The retirees wanted to be compensated for the additional costs, including having lost dental and vision coverage. Their contention is that for the duration of their retirement they should essentially have the health plan from the day they retired.

But that was never going to happen because the plan has always been evolving. There is no plan to go back to because that plan no longer exists.

It would also be impossible for any public or private provider to have stagnant plans. Medicine evolves and costs increase, and deductible amounts change. The deductible went from \$750 to \$1,500 in 2012 and doubled again under Plan A.

“The city’s position is everyone gets the same plan – employees, retirees. The contract under which everyone retires has the same language; that they shall get the same plan as employees as long as there is a plan,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. “And the plans have changed every year. This year Plan A will be a little better than last year.”

It didn’t help the retirees’ cause when their attorney didn’t show up for the May court hearing.

One thing the retirees have argued is that they are on a fixed income, while employees get raises that can help with additional expenses. The reality is employee raises are subject to approval by the City Council and are not an annual occurrence, while through the California Public Employee Retirement System there is an annual cost of living increase. This means retirees really aren’t on a fixed income.

Other aspects of the case remain to be fleshed out, including the actual status of the group. The plaintiffs have 30 days to amend their complaint.

Opinion: Anxiety over Calif.'s transitioning cannabis industry

By Joe Mathews

California tokers, why are you trippin' so hard?

You keep saying that marijuana helps manage anxiety. But those of you who work in or partake of the cannabis industry sound like the most stressed-out people in California.



Joe Mathews

And that leaves me wondering what's in your bong, especially since 2016 is supposed to be a year of great triumph for you. Cannabis is booming in California. New regulations on medical marijuana are coming together, and a November ballot initiative to legalize recreational use seems likely to pass. California is thus well on its way to becoming Mary Jane's global capital, and a national model for how to pull cannabis out of the black market shadows and into the legal light.

So if the future looks so dank (that's stoner-speak for awesome), why do you all look so wrecked?

Did you get some bad schwag or something?

In talking to some of you in recent weeks, I've learned there are two reasons why you're stressed out.

The first involves all the necessary pressure you're putting on yourselves. Cannabis is not just an industry, it's a movement to end prohibition, and the hardest times for movements can come right when they are on the verge of winning what they want. Your movement's victory—the end of cannabis prohibition—requires a difficult transition that is stressful and scary.

In California, by one estimate, there are as many as 10,000 cannabis-related businesses—only a couple hundred of which have the proper zoning and licenses to operate a medical marijuana business. That leaves thousands of you trying to work out your futures very quickly—at least before 2018, when regulations for medical marijuana (including a state marijuana czar) and for recreational use (assuming the ballot initiative passes) are supposed to be in place.

Some of you may choose to shut down. But others of you are engulfed in the difficult, expensive process of making your businesses legal quickly—but not so quickly that you run afoul of local police who are still conducting raids on your operations or federal authorities who already making banking and paying taxes so difficult for you. On top of all this stress comes the burden of being a political cause. Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom is trying to build a gubernatorial campaign by backing the ballot initiative to legalize recreational use.

That brings me to the second source of pressure on you: the constant outside demands on your industry from those of us in what cinematic stoner Jeffrey “The Dude” Lebowski called “the Square Community.”

California leaders have gotten way too high on the possibilities of fully legal marijuana. Today politicians and media claim that legal cannabis in California will end the drug war, rationalize our prison and court systems, create new jobs and economic opportunities in poorer and rural areas of the state, save agricultural businesses and lands, and

replenish strained local and state budgets with new taxes on weed.

Los Angeles County recently debated a plan to address its homelessness crisis with a marijuana tax. Environmentalists have been touting how marijuana farming can pioneer water-saving practices to mitigate the state drought. No small number of musicians—among them Snoop Dogg, the wizard of “weed wellness,” and Tommy Chong, the “godfather of ganja”—seem to think that by licensing their names to marijuana products, they can replace some of the revenues music used to provide.

Cannabis has come to be seen by its most zealous champions as a substance that can alter California realities—in ways reminiscent of our craze for gold in 1849 or for oil in the early 20th century. That is an awful lot of expectation riding on this one plant.

Before exploiting legal marijuana for their own schemes, California governments need to get this transition right. The tax system for cannabis should be comprehensible and not so extortionate that it drives out small players (or creates incentives to keep the black market alive). The regulatory regimes for medical marijuana and recreational use should fit together, and be transparent enough that California cannabis goes forward as a competitive market, not a state monopoly. To ease the transition, state government needs to do everything it can to help you—the growers, processors, dispensary operators and customers—negotiate these changes, including protecting you from the feds.

If California gets this right, maybe some of the biggest dreams for marijuana can come true. At the very least, cannabis could be a thriving and well-regulated industry.

But for now, as the marijuana-friendly rap group Cypress Hill like to say, we all gots to chill. These are stressful enough times for stoners already.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zocalo Public Square.

Nevada soldiers face mind-melting heat



Soldiers walk along a road in Taji, Iraq. Photo/Staff Sgt. Victor Joecks/U.S. Army National Guard

By Keith Rogers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada soldiers who are accustomed to 110-plus degree summer days knew it was going to be at least that hot during their 10-month-long overseas tour in the Middle East.

But it melts their minds to think they endured a historic heat

wave in Kuwait that reached 129 degrees on July 21 in Mitribah, Kuwait.

Actually, it was hotter than that. According to the website, Weather Underground, the temperature in Mitribah, Kuwait, on July 21 topped out at 129.2 degrees.

If verified, it would be the Earth's third hottest official temperature, tied with a 129.2 reading in Tirat Tsvi, Israel, on June 22, 1942, said Caleb Steele, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Las Vegas.

Read the whole story

Library hosting learning event centered on steam

The South Lake Tahoe Library will host a Steam Day at the library on Aug. 5 at 2pm.

Creation stations will be available for children of all ages to explore, investigate, and experiment with hands-on materials centered entirely around steam based learning.

The entire family is welcome at this outdoor event sponsored by Friends of the Library. The library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For more info, call 530.573.3185.

Calif. ballot measures see \$65M in 2Q

By Alison Noon, AP

SACRAMENTO – Campaigns supporting and opposing California's 17 ballot initiatives have reported raising at least \$65 million from April through June, according to paperwork filed this week with the secretary of state.

The total does not include money spent by people not coordinated with official ballot campaigns.

The vast majority of money spent to influence elections typically comes in the three months before Election Day. If that holds true, California could see a record amount spent on ballot initiatives this year.

A handful of races for the state Legislature are also drawing heavy spending, and candidates for governor are fundraising for a contest still two years out.

Here are some of the initiatives and races attracting the most fundraising in the last quarter:

Drug prices

Pharmaceutical companies reported raising \$16.5 million to oppose Proposition 61, an initiative to limit what the state can pay for prescription drugs, bringing the opposition campaign's cash on hand to a whopping \$66 million. The only major contribution supporting the initiative to mandate that California pay no more than the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs does for prescriptions was \$5 million from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation.

Tax increases

An association of hospitals gave a \$9 million loan to Proposition 56, the campaign for a \$2 tax increase on every pack of cigarettes sold in California. Initiative supporters ended last quarter with about \$10 million in the bank. Tobacco companies R.J. Reynolds and Altria affiliates gave \$16 million to defeat it in July, after the quarter ended. A separate proposal to extend a tax on high-income earners through 2030 to benefit public schools and health care has drawn no opponents, but that hasn't kept supporters from fundraising. The California Teachers Association has given \$13 million this year to support Proposition 55 and union groups gave another \$900,000 from April through June, bringing the campaign's bank account to \$14 million.

Marijuana legalization

Six separate campaigns supporting an initiative to legalize recreational marijuana received a total of \$6.8 million from April through June, and have reported another \$3 million since then. Law enforcement officers and anti-drug associations have given about \$130,000 to a campaign opposing Proposition 64 since April.

Hospital fees for Medi-Cal

Opponents of the proposal requiring voter approval of changes to hospital fees for state-subsidized health care revved up two campaigns with nearly \$8 million in contributions in the last quarter. But opponents' \$3.6 million cash on hand is still far less than the \$18 million Proposition 52 advocates have in the bank, despite receiving no contributions since March.

Criminal justice reform

Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, contributed \$2.6 million from his ballot initiative committee for his proposal to expand sentencing credits in prison, allow parole for nonviolent felons and make other reforms to the state criminal justice

system. The California Democratic Party, unions and a few individuals gave another \$2.3 million to Proposition 57. No opposition campaign has been reported.

Gun control

A proposal by Democratic Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom to require background checks to buy firearm ammunition and prohibit large-capacity magazines reported \$1.8 million in contributions from April through June, and received another \$400,000 from Silicon Valley entrepreneur Sean Parker on July 1. Opponents of Proposition 63 reported contributions totaling about \$200,000 last quarter.

Legislature

Democratic Assembly candidate Eloise Reyes reported her campaign was in the red at the end of June, having spent everything to finish the June 7 primary 8.5 percentage points behind incumbent Democratic Assemblywoman Cheryl Brown, who had \$272,000. The race to represent San Bernardino County has drawn more than \$2 million in independent expenditures. In Senate District 15 in the east San Francisco Bay, Sen. Jim Beall reported \$125,000 on hand June 30 while Assemblywoman Nora Campos, also a San Jose Democrat, had \$21,000 after she lost the primary by 22.5 percentage points.

2018 governor

State Treasurer John Chiang reported that he raised \$2.3 million for his 2018 bid for governor of California after joining the race in May. A fellow Democrat, Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, reported raising \$1.6 million in the first half of 2016, bringing his gubernatorial war chest to \$6.4 million. None of the other 11 lesser-known candidates who have officially joined the race have filed financial statements.

Guided drive-hike to Sand Harbor overlook

Nevada State Parks is putting on ranger-led hikes to the Sand Harbor overlook of the Tahoe Rim Trail on Aug. 12 and Sept. 17.

This is a moderate hike (4 miles total). Wear sturdy boots, sunscreen, bring lunch, drinks or snacks and dress for the forecasted weather. Children 8 and older are welcome.

Four-wheel drive is necessary and reservations are required by calling 775.831.0494. The hike is free, but donations to the park are appreciated.

Meet at Spooner Lake at 8:45am and carpool to the Marlette Peak Campground. From there it will be a 2-mile hike to the overlook.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Nevada Department of Transportation is suspending work at Cave Rock until Aug. 8 because of the increased traffic related to Hot August Nights. The temporary traffic control near Cave Rock will remain in place during this period, as will the single lane closure near Glenbrook.

- The Government Compensation in California **website** has

been updated to include 2015 self-reported salary data for state government, county courts, UC and CSU wages.

- Squaw Valley Ski Holdings plans to establish the nonprofit Squaw Valley Foundation that would be responsible for the management and distribution of millions of dollars generated from the project transfer fee if the Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan is approved.

- Kevin Roop is now director of schools, race department and events at Sugar Bowl-Royal Gorge.

- The El Dorado County Parks Division is having a cleanup day Aug. 6 from 8am-noon from Missouri Flat Road going west. Volunteers should meet at the railroad terminus on the south side of Missouri Flat Road. For more info, call 530.621.6060.

Caesars reports second quarter loss

By Associated Press

Caesars Entertainment Corp. on Wednesday reported a second-quarter loss of \$2.08 billion, after reporting a profit in the same period a year earlier.

The Las Vegas-based company said it had a loss of \$14.25 per share. Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

The casino operator posted revenue of \$1.23 billion in the period.

Caesars shares have risen slightly since the beginning of the year. In the final minutes of trading on Tuesday, shares hit \$7.91, a rise of 46 percent in the last 12 months.

Tahoe's hottest ticket: Harry Reid and friends

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Whoever said public policy doesn't sell hasn't tried to scrounge up VIP tickets to the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit.

Sales of VIP tickets to the "yearly gathering of federal, state, and local leaders dedicated to the goal of restoring and sustaining Lake Tahoe," were halted this week over concerns that scalpers were buying up the inventory with an eye for a markup and resale.

"We became aware that some tickets are being resold for profit and we are suspending VIP ticket sales until we can identify a way to protect the integrity of this event," stated an email from Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, the summit host. General admission tickets are still available online.

Read the whole story