

Nev. hearings on school choice likely to resonate nationwide

By Neal Morton, Las Vegas Review-Journal

If there's anything supporters and critics of school choice can agree on, it's the likelihood that a pair of state Supreme Court hearings today will have an impact on public education beyond Nevada's borders.

That's where the agreement seems to end, with parents, politicians and education policy experts widely divided on the constitutionality of Senate Bill 302.

The legislation, which Gov. Brian Sandoval signed into law last year, created what many consider the most expansive school choice program in the U.S. It allows parents who pull their children out of public school to sign up for an education savings account and tap about \$5,100 in state per-pupil funding to help pay for private school tuition or home-school, tutoring and other educational services.

Read the whole story

SLT offices open during construction

South Lake Tahoe's Services Center located at 1052 Tata Lane will be undergoing exterior modifications through Sunday.

The center is open during this time.

Work will start on the parking lot and walkway. Some parking will be blocked for construction. Customers may park across the street in the overflow lot or on the street.

The lobby of Lake Tahoe Airport is undergoing an overhaul. All offices are open there as well, including city and other businesses.

Sugar Pine Foundation needs help with watering

Volunteers are needed to water sugar pine seedlings.

With no rain this summer, Sugar Pine Foundation is helping the little trees.

Watering dates:

- Aug. 2, 1-3pm
Watering with Starbucks
Spooner Picnic Area
- Aug. 3, 10am-noon
Watering with Camp Explore
Sand Harbor NV State Park
- Aug. 9, 1-3pm
Watering with Starbucks
Kingsbury Middle School, Stateline
- Aug. 18, 1-3pm
Watering at LTCC with Science Camp
Lake Tahoe Community College, 1 College Way, South Lake Tahoe.

Fun facts from 2016 celeb golf tournament



Warriors guard Steph Curry was a magnet for fans during the ACC tournament. Photo/LTN

On his way to winning last weekend's American Century Championship tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline, Mark Mulder made 14 birdies, while on the road to last place Charles Barkley had 50 double-bogeys or higher in 54 holes.

- With basketball superstar Steph Curry and entertainment megastar Justin Timberlake on the links, the tournament established an all-time attendance record of 47,109 for the week. Saturday attracted a single-day record of 18,172.
- Concession sales were up more than 40 percent over last year's record setting figures.
- There were 324 boats on and near the beach along hole 17 during Saturday's round.
- More than 400 volunteers worked the event.

- The economic impact the tournament on the South Shore via lodging, dining, gaming, entertainment, recreation, activities and media exposure is about \$11 million.
 - There were 200 media members representing 60 outlets in online, television, radio, newspaper, magazine and social media covering the event.
 - Heather LeMaster hit a 336-foot drive to establish the women's world long drive record at elevation.
 - Five women playing in one year set a record.
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SLT police looking for suspect in assaults

Police are looking for a man who may have twice tried to assault women this week in South Lake Tahoe.



South Lake
Tahoe police
are looking
for this man.

A guest at Lakeland Village on July 25 told officers a man grabbed her from behind and dragged her into a storage closet. She was able to escape, although the suspect fled with her purse.

On July 26 a man fitting the same description approached a resident on Ski Run Boulevard. The woman told police the suspect was aggressive in his behavior and language, and didn't leave until she told him her family was inside.

The suspect is described as a Hispanic man between 18- and 30-years-old, about 5-feet-5-inches, small to medium build, with dark hair. In Wednesday's incident the suspect was riding a BMX bike.

Anyone who may have information is asked to call 530.542.6100 or Lake Tahoe Secret Witness at 530.541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Urban a legend to country fans in Tahoe



Keith Urban is a master on guitar. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Country superstar Keith Urban rocked the Harveys Lake Tahoe outdoor concert arena Wednesday night with a show of shows from an amazingly personable, highly talented artist.

Urban, 48, brought a mix of hits spanning his quarter-century career such as “Days Go By” and “Long Hot Summer” as well as new songs on tour off his 10th album “Ripcord,” including the sensational duet with Carrie Underwood “The Fighter.” (Note: A cute version in the car with his wife and actress Nicole Kidman posted on Facebook received millions of views.)

The Aussie entertainer delved deep into the latest album, performing the driving tune “Sun Don’t Let Me Down,” bluesy “Blue Ain’t Your Color,” sway-induced “Gettin’ In the Way,” banjo-picking “Wasted Time” and beat-heavy “John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16.”

Much to the delight of screaming, mostly-standing fans, the

guitar-player extraordinaire even tuned up hits from other artists such as the likes of John Cougar Mellancamp and Bob Marley. With the latter, the stage screens lit up in reggae colors green, red and yellow.

In his signature playful, boyish style, Urban engaged the audience often – addressing it as a collective “Tahoe,” which he acknowledged was good to return to.

“Love you Tahoe. You might not know the words, but you give it a shot,” he bellowed.

The feeling was mutual at the concert that doubled like a love fest.

“I love him,” one woman dancing in Section 17 said with a serious deep adoration.

What she was about to learn about three-quarters of the way through the show is that Urban was about to move his road show down the aisle to a mini stage feet away from her seat near the back of the arena. (Urban did the same thing at the giant Sleep Train Arena years ago in Sacramento, appearing in the middle of a mob that flanked him from all sides.)



Keith Urban has no problem connecting with his appreciative fans. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In Tahoe, adoring fans soon crushed in the empty space close to the mini stage, where Urban launched into his rhythmic, No. 1 2002 hit “Somebody Like You” while facing the back bleachers. He enlisted the help of one of his opening acts Brett Eldridge, a rising country singer with a personable style. The whole place erupted in cheers, singing and dancing.

At one point in the show, Urban also brought up to sing with him his other opening artist, Maren Morris, who had performed her smash hit “My Church” earlier that evening.

But July 27 at Harveys was more like Urban’s church, where thousands seemed to worship his brand of performance known for total play and an equally fun, guitar-heavy back-up band. Urban plays the electric guitar – and sometimes the bass and acoustical version – like it’s a part of his body.

Often arching his back and practically kissing the microphone, Urban looks to be the epitome of a blissful man and high-energy fun on stage. And during that relationship, the audience reciprocated to the glow of a huge lights display and precise audio music engineering.

The artist who essentially launched his career out of Nashville, never slowed up; delivering two encores – his 2006 chart-topping “Stupid Boy” and another No. 1 blockbuster “Raise ’Em Up” from 2015. It’s like the audience was not about to let him go down off the stage.

“God bless you,” he said to the persistent clapping.

Urban extended a heartfelt thank you to the crowd before walking off into the evening. The performer has another show scheduled for tonight, which may have residual, day-of tickets remaining.

Other outdoor summer concerts scheduled at the Harveys arena include: pop artist Lionel Richie on Aug. 13; rock group Steve Miller Band on Aug. 18; red rocker Sammy Hagar on Aug. 26; alternative rock band The Killers on Aug. 31; and soul singer/keyboardist Stevie Wonder on Sept. 2.

Opinion: Commonality between Brexit and Calif.'s coming election

By Joe Mathews

Do you think Brexit was a singularly British form of folly, having little to do with California? Think again. California is the global capital of Brexit-style votes, and this November's state ballot is littered with mini-Brexits.

Don't think of "a Brexit" as a vote to leave a larger political or economic union. (California isn't about to leave the U.S.—unless a Trump presidency stirs a Calexit movement). Brexit is better understood as a special kind of ballot measure—a plebiscite. Plebiscites are placed on the ballot not by citizens or interest groups, but by powerful politicians to serve their own political needs.



Joe Mathews

And plebiscites—to put it bluntly—are cursed. The term comes from the Latin pleb- (the common people) and scitum (decree). But these days it may as well mean “backfire.”

The plebiscite curse describes a tendency of plebiscites to blow up in the faces of the powerful people who pursue them. There are hundreds of examples around the world. Among the most famous was Chilean strongman Augusto Pinochet’s 1988 plebiscite to extend his constitutional power; dissidents beat the plebiscite and ended his hold on power (a campaign portrayed in the Oscar-nominated film “No”).

In the British Brexit, the self-cursed politician was Prime Minister David Cameron, who wanted his country to remain in the European Union but put the Brexit question to the voters in order to quiet, once and for all, the anti-EU voices within his own party. He assumed he could win the vote, and put the Tories’ Hamlet-like “to be or not to be European” debate to rest. Instead, the British voters decided to leave—and Cameron lost his job as prime minister.

This dynamic should not sound foreign to Californians. Our elected officials have long put measures on the ballot—and been hurt by their defeat or hamstrung by the unintended consequences of victory. The biggest and most recent example of the plebiscite curse here was Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 2005 special election for four ballot initiatives of his own making. All four lost, and he only saved his governorship by repudiating his own effort and replacing his top advisors.

While politicians in other states have also damaged themselves with plebiscites, no place has been as profoundly cursed as California. One reason: our state is the only place where a law made by ballot initiative can't be changed except by another vote of the people—forcing even plebiscite-averse politicians to go to the ballot. Indeed, California's inflexible form of direct democracy—and a good part of the dysfunctional governing systems it has spawned—is itself a plebiscite curse. In 1911, Gov. Hiram Johnson held a massive plebiscite to introduce the initiative and referendum process.

This year, the November ballot is getting criticism for its excessive length—17 statewide ballot measures—but we should pay extra attention to the ones placed on the ballot by elected officials who call on the people to deliver their desired results, instead of relying on the power of their offices.

Gov. Brown has his own plebiscitary initiative on the ballot. It would liberalize sentencing laws, but it's risky. With crime up in California and public safety a bigger concern nationally, Republicans might defeat it and try to cripple the governor's larger efforts to reduce the state's prison population and better re-integrate former prisoners into California communities.

Gavin Newsom, the lieutenant governor, is taking on the plebiscite curse with two initiatives—one to tighten gun controls and the other to legalize marijuana. He's using both measures to show leadership as part of his nascent campaign to succeed Brown as governor in 2018.

But his gun control measure has raised tensions with Democratic legislators pursuing similar measures in the Capitol. And if Newsom's two plebiscites lose, it could badly damage his candidacy—and his career.

The dangers of plebiscites go beyond the risks to politicians

and their causes. When powerful elected officials use the ballot for their own devices, they can raise questions about the credibility of our democracy. Attorney General Kamala Harris has faced criticism for writing favorable ballot titles and expediting legal reviews of plebiscites put forth by other politicians. And this year, the California Supreme Court, whose chief justice has been pressing for more funding for the courts, recently allowed the governor's sentencing plebiscite to make this year's ballot despite extensive alterations to the measure that have delayed previous ballot initiatives. It would seem direct democracy can be more direct for insiders.

As the Brexit vote in Britain reminds us, when the leadership of a state or country loses credibility, great and risky political earthquakes can result. From Europe to California, the plebiscite is a curse that can feed on itself.

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

South Tahoe author on book signing circuit

Todd Borg, author of the Owen McKenna mystery series, has a slew of book signings coming up.

His latest book, "Tahoe Dark", is now out.

The South Lake Tahoe resident will be at the following locations:

South Lake Tahoe

- July 29, 4-7pm: Artifacts, 4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd. (in the Raley's Village Center)
- Aug. 3, 6:30pm: Talk and signing at the South Lake Tahoe Library, Rufus Allen Blvd.
- Aug. 7, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe at Ski Run Boulevard.

Reno

- July 30, 11am: Talk and signing at Sundance Bookstore at 121 California Ave.
- Aug. 13, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe, 3480 Lakeside, No. 1.

Tahoe City

- July 30, 3pm: Geared for Games, Boatworks Mall.

Truckee

- Aug. 4, 5-7pm: Truckee Thursdays in The Bookshelf tent.

Carson Valley

- Aug. 5, 6pm: Talk and signing at Shelby's Bookshoppe, 1663 Lucerne St., Minden
- Sept. 24-25: Exhibit and sign books at the Candy Dance Festival, Genoa
- Oct. 5, 4:30-6:30pm: Exhibit and sign at the Minden Library Author Day, Minden.

Carson City

- Aug. 6, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe, 4385 S. Carson st.
- Sept. 27, 6:15pm: Talk and signing at Browsers Books, 711 E Washington St.

Bay Area

- Sept. 10-11: Exhibiting and sign books at the Mountain View Art & Wine Festival, Mountain View
- Nov. 11-13: Exhibit and sign books at the San Mateo

Harvest Festival, San Mateo

- Nov. 25-27: Exhibit and sign books at the San Jose Harvest Festival, San Jose Convention Center.

Sacramento

- Nov. 4-6: Exhibit and sign books at the Sacramento Fine Arts Show, Sacramento Convention Center
- Nov. 18-20: Exhibit and sign books at the Sacramento Harvest Festival, CalExpo.

Quincy

Dec. 2, 5pm: Exhibit and sign books at Epilog Books for the Quincy Sparkle celebration.

Barbecue on wood deck ignites early morning fire

A charcoal barbecue is likely what started a fire near Carnelian Bay this week, according to North Tahoe Fire Protection District officials.

The house in the Cedar Flat area caught fire about 4:10am on July 28.

Smoke woke up the residents, who then called 911 after seeing flames on the deck. No one was hurt.

The fire spread from the deck to the exterior wall.

Firefighters recommend not using a charcoal grill on a wood deck.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The South Lake Tahoe Library will host Mad Science on July 29. The free outdoor show starts at 2pm at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe. Mad Science will be performing the show Fire and Ice, which demonstrates chemical reactions, bubbling potions and more.
- Tahoe Brew Tours of South Lake Tahoe takes people to three craft breweries between Incline Village and South Lake Tahoe for \$99. This covers tastings at each brewery, appetizers at one, and a bus equipped with water, snacks and a cooler for growlers.
- Tahoe Improv Players will be at the Grand Hall at Valhalla on the South Shore on Aug. 2 at 7:30pm. For more info, go **online**.
- Carolyn Dolan with members of the Reno Jazz Orchestra will be at the Boat House Theater on the South Shore on Aug. 3 at 7:30pm. Buy tickets **online**.