

Claim challenges funding source for Hwy. 89 work

While the goal is to break ground this summer on the Fanny Bridge-Highway 89 realignment in Tahoe City, the project still has not gone out to bid. That may not happen until later this month.

In the mean time the state Attorney General's Office is reviewing a claim filed by Tahoe City resident Jim Sajdak regarding the multimillion-dollar project.

The project would take Highway 89 on the North Shore through 64 acres of forest and turn the bridge into a regular road to be maintained by Placer County. They goal is to eliminate backup at the Y and ease congestion.

A roundabout is slated to be built at the Y, plus two others at key locations.

The Tahoe Transportation District is the lead agency.

"I have filed a claim to the California Attorney General's Office which states that the funding application filed by the TTD to the California Transportation Commission contains numerous amounts of falsified information to gain state funding in the amount of \$4.9 million," Sajdak said. "The California Attorney General's Office is currently reviewing the information provided under the California False Claims Act which states that it is a felony to obtain state funding based on falsified information."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Battle royal for open Senate seat in Nevada

By Erica Werner, AP

In a state where the politics can be as raucous as the casinos, the race for U.S. Senate in Nevada is shaping up as a battle royal.

Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid's retirement after three decades has created a rare open seat that offers Republicans their one real shot at winning a state now held by the Democrats. With their slim Senate majority under siege around the country, Republicans are determined to replace Reid with one of their own, Rep. Joe Heck, a wonkish and hard-working Army reservist.

But the canny Reid is just as intent on installing a Democrat to replace him. He recruited a former state attorney general, Catherine Cortez Masto, who would be the first Latina ever to serve in the U.S. Senate. Her candidacy is giving the state's increasingly powerful and overwhelmingly Democratic Latino voting bloc an opportunity to send a message to GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump, who is sowing fear and anger in their community with his threats to build a wall with Mexico and deport more than 11 million immigrants who are in the country illegally.

With special interest money already gushing into the race, the dynamics make for a super-charged throw-down in this state of bright lights and wild contradictions.

"It's not lost on either side of the aisle that the Senate majority in 2017 could very well come down to this race," Heck said in an interview in his clean and orderly campaign office. As volunteers worked the phones, Heck professed confidence, saying he has won three competitive races for his Southern

Nevada House seat and insisted he would do it again for Senate.

"After eight years of Barack Obama and 30 years of Harry Reid people are truly ready for a change, especially in a place like Nevada where we're still bouncing along the bottom in economic recovery," Heck said.

Campaigning at El Tarasco Mexican restaurant, where colorful offerings included rose petal ice cream, Cortez Masto played up a different kind of change. She emphasized her Mexican roots, reminding supporters her grandfather emigrated from Chihuahua and she and her sister were the first in their family to graduate from college. In an interview, she was quick to link Heck to Trump.

"It is crazy to me that in this day and age we're having this discussion about electing somebody who is full of hate and discrimination," Cortez Masto said. "I have an opponent I'm running against, Congressman Heck, who is supporting him."

It's a line of attack that figures to be a staple of Democratic Senate campaigns around the country this year. In Nevada, Democrats are sending two people in parrot costumes and Trump hats to follow Heck around, intending to suggest he parrots Trump's views. Despite blistering heat topping 100 degrees, the parrots jumped up and down outside a Hyundai dealership where Heck was campaigning one recent afternoon, before getting escorted off the lot.

Heck insisted such attacks won't work.

"People know who Joe Heck is," he said. "This idea of identity politics or guilt by association, I think the electorate is smarter than that."

If Heck faces a challenge in being linked to Trump, Cortez Masto is confronting something similar in her connections to Reid, who is closely involved in her campaign and has put his

still-formidable political machine behind her. Reid, 76, is a polarizing figure in the state, beloved by many Democrats but loathed by Republicans.

Cortez Masto, a cautious campaigner who has not previously faced a highly competitive race, is quick to change the topic when asked about him.

“Sen. Reid’s not on the ballot, and to me this is a race I’m focused on about the issues that people in my state, where I was born and raised, care about, because I will be representing them in Washington, not Sen. Reid,” Cortez Masto said.

Yet for both candidates in Nevada, as in other states with competitive Senate races, the outcome will depend partly on something they can’t control: how the presidential race plays out between Trump and the likely Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton.

Republicans are optimistic Trump could win Nevada, but the state has gone Democratic in the past two presidential elections. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by some 65,000 voters, a figure Democrats and labor unions are working hard to increase even more.

With Trump as their nominee, Republicans face the prospect of record Latino turnout. Activists point to increased voter registrations and citizenship applications as evidence Latinos are lining up to prevent Trump from becoming president.

“Heck is doomed,” Reid himself predicted when asked about the impact of the Latino vote.

After greeting supporters at El Tarasco restaurant on a recent afternoon, Cortez Masto headed across the street to an early-voting site where a life-size Elvis Presley cutout beckoned voters to the polls ahead of the state’s June 14 congressional primary.

Neither Cortez Masto nor Heck faces serious opposition in the primary, though in a taste of Nevada's colorful politics one of Heck's opponents is a hard-core conservative named Sharron Angle. She lost a winnable Senate race against Reid six years ago after a series of gaffes, including telling Latino school-children they looked like Asians. Angle doesn't appear to have much money or support this time around, but she recently produced an ad depicting herself as a tiger and Heck as a bunny rabbit, and showing herself gripping Trump's hand.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- HGTV Ultimate House Hunt contest features homes from around the world, including one from Glenbrook. Vote **online**. Each vote enters people into a contest to win \$10,000.
 - Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules from Caltrans for the week.
 - The Blue Angels will headline National Championship Air Races in Reno, Sept. 14-18.
 - Rock Tahoe Half Marathon is June 18.
 - Placer County planning commissioners on June 9 at 10am will discuss the Martis Valley West project. The meeting is at Granlibakken in Tahoe City.
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Workshop topic – better customer service

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and Tahoe Tactical Team is having a Knock-Your-Socks-Off customer service workshop on June 15, 1-5pm, at the chamber's conference room (169 Highway 50, Stateline).

Team coach Anne Marie Smith will teach how to turn customers into raving fans who turn a business into a powerhouse of repeat customers.

Not a business owner? Use the workshop to elevate your career with the highest level of customer service standards.

Attendees will be taught techniques and phrases to make customers feel valued, methods of managing difficult situations more effectively, and how to win over even the most stubborn of sales.

The Tahoe Tactical Team provides help with all aspects of starting, running, and growing a small business at no cost.

The Knock-Your-Socks-Off-Workshop is \$20 for members, and \$40 for non-members. For more information and to register, go **online**.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Hannah

Hannah is a 2 year old Dogue De Bordeaux mix who weighs about 50 pounds.

She is a very sweet, calm girl who has had a rough life so far, and is happy to be treated nicely now. Like bulldogs, this breed doesn't do well in excessive heat, and owners should be careful not to over-exercise them.

Hannah gets along well with the other big dogs at the shelter. As with all dogs you should bring your dog to meet her.

Hannah is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Search crews a safety net for recreationists

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Weekend warriors may not be prepared for the elements, but a cadre of volunteers has their backs.

Those volunteers come with varied backgrounds. Often their day job has nothing in common with rappelling down a slab of granite to find a hiker, or jumping into rushing water to save a capsized kayaker, or performing first aide on an injured outdoor enthusiast.

Ryder Evans and Chris Kozłowski with El Dorado County's Search and Rescue spoke last week at the Sorooptimist International of South Lake Tahoe meeting at Harrah's Lake Tahoe about what they encounter on assignments.

While they work with El Dorado County Sheriff's Department, they are not employees, they buy their own gear, they are not compensated, they work at all hours of the day and night, and what they do is risky.

The night before the Tahoe group – of which there about 35 members – had been called out to Gilmore Lake in Desolation Wilderness to find a couple hikers who got nervous because they didn't think they could get out before darkness set in. They were in shorts, had no water and were above the tree line. The crew found them and everyone walked out.

Evans said using a cell phone to contact SAR is ideal – assuming it's a true emergency – because cell phone pings often are within 300 meters of the person. It can be as much

as 1,000 meters, and that can be problematic.

“We’ll spend a lot of time trying to figure out where you are,” Ryder said.

Sometimes SAR gains access to phone records to know the last text sent or call made. They look for vehicles.

Dogs are a big part of crews, especially for El Dorado County, which has three. Kozłowski is one of those handlers. She has Mika.

It was a colleague of hers who found Carson May, the Sugar Bowl ski instructor, who went missing in January because a presumed avalanche swept him to his death.

“It’s finding what shouldn’t be there,” Kozłowski said of what the dogs look for.

People are out of place in the wilderness. It could also be a cell phone or other object a dog homes in on. A dog’s keen sense of smell is what makes them so valuable. They can find people buried 6-feet deep in an avalanche, or circle above water with a person 30-feet deep in water.

It’s best if they can get an object with the missing person’s scent. This could be a swab taken from the vehicle. Kozłowski joked that people should leave a pair of dirty socks in a bag at home – just in case you go missing.

Of course telling someone your plans is another good idea so crews will have a better idea where to search.

The top reasons why SAR is called out:

- Lights went out – (AKA – darkness) This is more common in winter when days are shorter.
- Lost the trail.
- Parties split up.

- Maleitist – especially for guys between 20 and 34.
- Bad choices.
- Poor job of calculating distance and time.
- Lower leg injuries.
- Poor communication.
- People afraid of animals.
- Mechanical failures.
- It's easy to call 911. "A lot of times we say if you didn't have 911, you wouldn't call us," Ryder said.

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Note:

- There will be a fundraiser for El Dorado County Search and Rescue's Tahoe unit on June 22 at 7pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$22, which includes a buffet and live music.

Opinion: No justification for Calif. transportation tax hike

By Jon Coupal

A personal digression: My father was head of the Iowa Department of Transportation (then called the Iowa Highway Commission) in the late 1960s and early 1970s before he was

appointed by President Gerald Ford to serve as deputy federal highway administrator. (Of course, he lost that job when Jimmy Carter became president, but he continued to work in the private sector for a transportation think tank). When I was in high school, I remember him coming home from an ASHTO conference. That organization, the Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, was a pretty well respected group and still is. He was complaining bitterly about what was going on in California. I don't recall his exact words, but the gist of it was that the new head of California's transportation agency, called Caltrans, had been taken over by a certifiably crazy person (with no background in transportation policy) by the name of Adriana Gianturco. According to my father, in the 1950s and '60s, California had the best transportation agency in the entire world. But all that changed with the election of a new, anti-growth, small-is-beautiful governor by the name of Jerry Brown.

Now, fast forward 40 years. Gov. Brown, version 2.0, proposes a budget that assumes a big increase in transportation taxes and fees. The California Legislature shouldn't just say no, it should say hell no.

Where to start? First, let's take judicial notice of the fact that California is already a high tax state with the highest income tax rate and the highest state sales tax in America. But more relevant for the issue at hand, we also have the highest fuel costs in the nation. This is because of both the fourth highest excise tax on fuel and the fact that refineries are burdened with additional costs to comply with California's environmental regulations.

The high cost to drive in California might be understandable if we were getting value for our tax dollars. But we aren't. A big problem is that Caltrans is dysfunctional, plain and simple. It has never fully recovered from the days when the agency was effectively destroyed by Gianturco. A report by the California state auditor just a couple of months ago concluded

that a primary responsibility of Caltrans – maintenance of our highways – is not being executed in a manner that is even close to being efficient or competent.

State Sen. John Moorlach, R-Costa Mesa, the only CPA currently serving in the California Legislature, reacted saying that, “This audit reinforces the fact that our bad roads are not a result of a lack of funding. They’re a result of a lack of competence at Caltrans.”

Moreover, a report by the legislative analyst concluded that Caltrans is overstaffed by 3,500 employees costing California taxpayers over a half billion dollars a year. All this compels the obvious question: Why, for goodness sake, do we want to give these people even more money?

Another unneeded and costly practice consists of project labor agreements for transportation construction projects. These pro-union policies shut out otherwise competent companies from bidding on projects resulting in California taxpayers shelling out as high as 25 percent more than they should for building highways and bridges.

Finally, California’s environmental requirements are legendary for their inefficiency while also doing little for the environment. Exhibit A in this foolishness is Brown’s incomprehensible pursuit of the ill-fated high speed rail project. Not only has the project failed to live up to any of the promises made to voters, it is currently being kept alive only by virtue of the state’s diversion of “cap and trade” funds which are supposed to be expended on projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But in the Kafkaesque world of California transportation policies, the LAO has concluded that the construction of the HSR project actually produces a net increase in emissions, at least for the foreseeable future.

No one disputes the dire need for improvements in California’s

transportation infrastructure. But imposing draconian taxes and higher registration fees that serve only to punish the middle class while wasting billions on projects that don't help getting Californians get to work or school cannot and should not be tolerated. Legislators who present themselves to voters as fiscally responsible need to understand that a vote for higher transportation taxes will engender a very angry response from their constituents.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, California's largest grass-roots taxpayer organization dedicated to the protection of Proposition 13 and the advancement of taxpayers' rights.

Glow-in-the-dark sidewalks could replace streetlights

By Casey Williams, Huffington Post

The world's dullest building material just got a lot more exciting.

A scientist in Mexico announced earlier this month that he had developed solar-powered, glow-in-the-dark cement that could be used to illuminate roads, bike lanes and walking paths, according to the news site *Investigación y Desarrollo*.

The cement absorbs energy from the sun during the day and converts that energy into light at night. After a full day under the sun, the material can shine for up to 12 hours.

Cement is a powder that forms a gel when it's mixed with water. Adding water also typically produces tiny crystal

flakes that block light.

Read the whole story

California's registered voters hit record high

By John Myers, Los Angeles Times

With one of the most closely watched presidential primary seasons in modern times , California's voter rolls grew by almost 650,000 in the final six weeks of registration. And three of every four new voters were Democrats.

On Friday, Secretary of State Alex Padilla released the final report of voter registration prior to the June 7 statewide primary. The deadline to register for Tuesday's election was May 23.

Of the 646,220 people who registered in the final rush –between April 8 and May 23 – 76 percent became Democrats.

California's total voter registration now stands at 17,915,053. That's the largest number ever registered heading into a primary election.

Read the whole story

Landowner wins wetland development case in court

By Greg Stohr, Bloomberg

The U.S. Supreme Court gave landowners a new avenue to challenge some federal regulatory decisions affecting their property rights, in a case that three conservative justices said raised troubling questions about government overreach.

The 8-0 ruling said landowners can go straight to court after federal regulators decide that a piece of property containing wetlands is covered by the Clean Water Act.

The ruling is a blow to the Obama administration and a victory for property-rights activists, potentially streamlining the approval process for people and companies seeking to develop wetlands.

[Read the whole story](#)