

Opinion: 'Dedication to upholding the law'



Judge Nelson Brooks is up for re-election on June 7. Photo/Provided

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News* asked both candidates for El Dorado County Superior Court judge to write a guest column. To date the incumbent is the only one to do so. The election is June 7.

By Nelson Brooks

I am honored and proud to be one of your judges here in El Dorado County. I graduated from the University of California's Hastings College of the Law, and have been on the bench now for approximately seven years after practicing as a trial attorney in Sacramento and El Dorado counties for over 25 years.

I was first appointed to the bench by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009, and retained by a vote of over 75 percent of our county's voters in 2010.

My opponent is a trial attorney with barely 10 years total experience as a licensed lawyer (the absolute minimum required before an attorney may even apply for a judicial position), who earned his law degree at night school. His primary area of practice has been DUI and marijuana defense cases.

I see my role as a sitting judge to be the tireless and unswerving dedication to upholding the law and applying it fairly, without prejudice or preference to all of our counties' citizens who come before me. I believe that our judicial system must provide a respectful, efficient, no-nonsense forum for the fair and equitable resolution of disputes, and that it is an honor and a privilege to have been selected to serve the people of El Dorado County in this capacity.

I am committed to justice and common sense. Being a judge in the El Dorado Superior Court is about experience, integrity and fairness. My opponent is a criminal defense attorney who does not have the knowledge or understanding of the rule of law to do this job. I am endorsed by District Attorney Vern Pierson, Presiding Judge Suzanne Kingsbury, Judge James Wagoner, Judge Ken Melikian, Judge Vicki Ashworth, Chief Public Defender Teri Monterosso, Presiding Appellate Justice Vance Raye and all of the associate justices of the Third District Court of Appeals, which is the appellate court that reviews any of my decisions that might go up on appeal.

I have also been endorsed by the South Lake Tahoe Police Officers Association, South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David, County Supervisor Sue Novasel, the Mountain Democrat newspaper and many others.

I believe that justice should be dispensed without bias and with fiscal efficiency. I have served in virtually every division of our Superior Court, presiding over both court and jury trials.

I was born in Columbus, Ohio, and traveled quite a bit growing up – my father served our country in the Air Force and was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. He continued in the Air Force after the war ended, rising to the rank of full colonel. Over his career our family lived in many places including Germany, the Philippine Islands, and tours at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., before his final assignment at Hamilton AFB in Marin County, where he retired.

Prior to becoming a judge, I practiced law for about 27 years in El Dorado and Sacramento counties. I graduated from UC Hastings College of the Law in 1982 after earning my undergraduate degree from Santa Clara University. I am fully committed to our community. My wife and I met and married here in El Dorado County in 1976. My wife, Tish Starr Brooks, graduated from UC Davis Veterinary School in 1988. She practiced in El Dorado County for many years. We have two adult children who were born and raised on the West Slope in the home in which we still live today.

As an attorney for approximately 27 years, I successfully litigated many thousands of business and personal injury matters, representing both plaintiffs and defendants, and earning one of the highest ratings available from Martindale-Hubbell. As your El Dorado County Superior Court judge I have handled virtually every case type and courtroom assignment. I have gained broad judicial experience in my time on the bench, having worked in every division of our county's court system, including civil and probate, family law, dependency-delinquency, traffic, and, for approximately the past six months, in the criminal arraignment department.

I have presided over jury and/or court trials in all of these areas, and have imposed one of the highest criminal sentences in our county's history in a multiple child abuse-molestation trial: 750 years to life. Handling this volume of cases requires swift but well thought-out determinations as to how these matters should proceed: all the way to trial in the

trial courts; or resolution at the arraignment stage, with the commiserate cost savings to the court and the county, but without compromising the defendant's constitutional rights to a full and fair hearing.

My decisions must be made quickly and efficiently in order to keep the never-ending flow of criminal cases moving smoothly. In the time that I have been in this assignment I have been able to establish a record of efficiency and timeliness in accomplishing these goals. During my over 30-year career as a lawyer and judge, I have worked as a civil litigator and tried cases in both federal court and in state courts throughout Northern California. In those 30-plus years of practice, both as a lawyer and as a judge, I have never been disciplined, sanctioned nor investigated for any alleged misconduct. In my private practice before coming on the bench, I have never had any complaints lodged against me by clients or adversaries for unethical or even questionable conduct.

I take pride in my commitment to this community. Tish and I fell in love with El Dorado County and knew that we wanted to raise our family here and give back everything we could to continue making this an incredible place to live. I served for nearly a decade on the Snowline Hospice Board of Directors, coached youth soccer and basketball, and am a past president of the El Dorado County Bar Association. I have previously served as a trustee for the County Law Library, been chairman of the Evelyn Horn Scholarship Selection Committee and continue to serve as a volunteer judge for the county's Teen Court Program.

Since taking office on the El Dorado County Superior Court, I have worked to improve operations by eliminating unnecessary, duplicative and expensive court appearances. I also helped implement a new, streamlined system for requesting necessary appearances directly. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue efficiently handling the great volume of cases that must be processed through this department.

In the time I have served on the bench I have assisted in implementing the following:

- We have an online request for oral argument process available online. I helped create that when I was assigned to civil.
- Our public website is more accessible, user friendly, and has more information for attorneys and the public.
- We now have transcripts available online, speeding the process and saving money on copying costs.
- Our court is very fiscally strong and even with the reduction of some of our workforce, we have been able to keep afloat operationally, with little noticeable difference to the public.
- The court now has its own telephone appearance system. This system generates revenue for the court and allows attorneys and parties to appear by phone for brief appearances.
- We now handle most search warrants electronically.
- We have created an online orientation for family law litigants prior to mediation. Prior to that time, the parties had to come to court for that purpose.
- We now provide interpreters for all case types.
- Other efficiencies include being able to pay traffic and criminal fines, fees and restitution online and via credit card. People now also have the ability to handle some aspects of their traffic tickets remotely.

It has been my honor to serve the people of El Dorado County as your Superior Court judge and I respectfully ask for your vote on June 7, 2016, so I can continue to serve our community in the future.

Overtime pay to expand to millions of U.S. workers

By Jeanne Sahadi, CNN Money

Starting later this year, millions more workers will become eligible for overtime pay.

Under a new rule announced by the White House Tuesday, anybody making a salary of less than \$47,476 (\$913 a week) will automatically qualify for overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours a week.

That's roughly double the \$23,660 threshold (or \$455 a week) that's currently in place.

The change – which has been criticized as too drastic by many employers – will go into effect on Dec. 1, 2016.

Read the whole story

Talk to delve into how thoughts affect behavior

Don't believe everything you think: How our thoughts affect mood and behavior is the subject of a June 9 talk at Sierra Nevada College.

Karin Sable is a licensed marriage and family therapist providing mental health and counseling services in the

Truckee-Tahoe area. She will talk about how negative thoughts are a normal part of the developing brain. Understanding how these thoughts evolve and their relationship to mood and behavior gives people power to reconsider their thinking and affect real change.

Cost is \$5. **Registration** for this event is required. The program will begin at 6pm with refreshments and no-host bar from 5:30-6pm at 291 Country Club Drive in Incline Village. Seating is open at 5:30pm to guests who have preregistered, open seating starts at 5:50pm.

California losing most land to development

By Paul Rogers, Mercury News

The natural landscape of the American West is gradually disappearing under a relentless march of new subdivisions, roads, oil and gas production, agricultural operations and other human development, according to a detailed mapping study released Tuesday.

From 2001 to 2011, an area totaling 4,321 square miles – or 15 times the size of San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco combined – was modified by development in the 11 Western states, the report found, with California losing the most natural land, and Wyoming and Utah changing at the fastest rate.

“We are nibbling away at our wild places at a fairly rapid clip,” said Mike Dombeck, former chief of the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in the 1990s.

The report was produced by scientists at Conservation Science Partners, a nonprofit research organization based in Truckee, who spent a year analyzing more than 30 large databases and a decade of satellite images over Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

[Read the whole story](#)

Firefighters test skills on live fire in Stateline



Tahoe Douglas firefighters practice rescuing a person from a burning building.

Photo/Provided

A building at the end of Kahle Drive burned for the better part of this week before firefighters fully extinguished it.

This was because Tahoe Douglas firefighters were training. They had access to the Kingsbury Grade Improvement District building that is no longer in use near the old trailer park in Stateline.

“We have had a lot of turnover in the last few years so there are a lot of guys who need live fire experience,” Assistant Chief Scott Baker told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The fire was started, then put out, and repeated several times. Crews watched how it would spread. Some were inside, some outside. Various scenarios were created so they could witness how the fire would react. They also were able to feel the effects of smoke and heat.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Truckee Police Department has added an electric motorcycle to the fleet. It is part of an effort to use alternative-powered vehicles, reduce emissions and noise pollution. Grants paid for it.

• Longtime Placer County elections employee Ryan Ronco was appointed to the top elections job by the Board of Supervisors May 17.

- The Sugar Pine Foundation is partnering with Stillwater Spa & Salon in Incline Village for a Garden Party fundraising event on June 3 from 5-8pm. For more info and to RSVP, go **online**.

- Here are the Sierra and El Dorado-Tahoe roadwork schedules from Caltrans for the upcoming week.

- Liberty Utilities' walk-in offices located in South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Vista will be closed May 27 and May 30. The former is to accommodate a billing system upgrade and the later for Memorial Day.

Fire safety on USFS land being stressed

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is expecting a busy Memorial Day weekend.

With its 6.3 million acres, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is the largest national forest in the lower 48 states. Most forest recreation sites have opened for the season, with the remainder expected to open later in the summer as the snow in higher elevations melt. Visitors should also be aware that even if a recreation site is accessible, all amenities may not be available yet.

The Forest Service is asking equestrians to stay off higher elevation trails until conditions become dryer.

Despite snowy and muddy conditions at higher elevations, it is extremely dry at lower elevations. Forest officials are asking the public to be cautious with activities that could start a

wildfire.

Despite recent rains, overall fire danger remains elevated due to extended drought.

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is encouraging visitors to follow several fire safety tips:

- Do not leave campfires unattended.
- Clear vegetation and dry debris down to bare soil within 10 feet around campfire.
- Be sure to completely put out campfires, leaving the site cold to the touch.
- Make sure lighting and heating devices are cool before refueling.
- Ensure cigarettes, cigars and tobacco pipes are fully extinguished when not in use.
- Use caution when operating vehicles in close proximity to vegetation.
- Spark arresting devices must be properly installed and maintained on all internal combustion engines.

Forest users also are reminded to avoid driving on snowy, wet or muddy roads. If an area is saturated, on or off-road vehicles will cause significant damage such as rutting, erosion, potholes and mud bogs.

Why are ski towns seeing more suicides?

By Kelley McMillan, National Geographic

On a sunny morning in late February, Tom Slocum, a 57-year-old ski bum in Telluride, Colo., walked up Tomboy Road, a popular hiking route that winds above the north side of town. An avid athlete and skier, Slocum moved to Telluride in 1984, a couple of years after graduating college. Like many ski town residents, he'd worked several jobs over the years, in hotels, mostly. Over the last five or so years, he'd grown frustrated with his life—presumably by the fact the he was a middle-aged man living in a shack behind a multimillion dollar home, struggling to get by in one of the country's most idyllic ski towns.

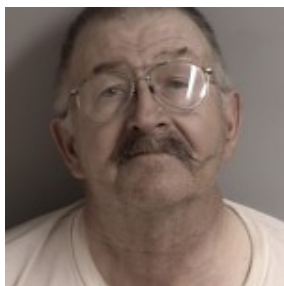
About a mile up Tomboy, Slocum pulled over and sat down next to a small creek. From his perch above Telluride, he looked out at the majestic San Juan Mountains, which towered above the 2,000-person town and its pastel Victorians. Across the valley, the Bear Creek basin etched up the east side of the resort and disappeared into a playground of snow-capped peaks. Then, just after dawn cast its first rays, Slocum pulled out a handgun and shot himself.

Slocum's death was the first of three suicides that occurred in San Miguel County over two weeks in late February and early March. Then in May, a 46-year-old skier widely regarded as one of the best riders in the San Juans, took his life. The rash of self-inflicted deaths boosted the county's rate of suicide by firearms over the past 12 months to more than six times higher than the national average. But Telluride isn't alone. The number of suicides in Aspen, Colo., is three times the country's mean rate. Utah's Salt Lake County, home to Alta and Snowbird, has almost twice as many suicides as the national

average. And six suicides over two and a half years in Truckee prompted the community to launch a suicide task force in 2014. Though tourists from around the world flock to these locales to ski their slopes and ride their single track, paradise harbors a darker reality: resort town residents are taking their lives at alarming rates.

Read the whole story

14-year sentence in child sex abuse case



Allan Delisle

A South Lake Tahoe man is going to spend the next 14 years in prison for sexually abusing disabled children.

Allan Delisle, 69, was sentenced May 19 by El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury.

Delisle was arrested Aug. 19 on charges of lewd and lascivious acts with a child, oral copulation of a child under 16 years old, oral copulation of a child by force, and oral copulation of a victim with a mental disability.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kayaker rescued near Sand Harbor

A lake wind advisory didn't deter people from kayaking at Lake Tahoe on Thursday, but it did mean they needed rescuing.

North Lake Tahoe Fire and Washoe County Sheriff's teams pulled a woman from the water near Sand Harbor on May 19 about 10:30am after her kayak overturned.

Her name and hometown have not been released. She was wearing a life jacket.

The man she was kayaking with was able to get to Chimney Beach to call 911.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*