California missing out on green manufacturing jobs

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

When solar technology company SMA America was looking for a place to put its headquarters, Rocklin was a logical choice. California, after all, represents more than 40 percent of the national market for solar installations.

When it came to choosing a place to manufacture its solar and wind inverters, however, the firm went to Denver.

“Denver offered a good mix of affordable buildings, access to skilled labor, a convenient distribution infrastructure and an overall attractive and supportive business climate,” said Jurgen Krehnke, president and general manager of SMA America.

California leads the nation in encouraging renewable energy. Taxpayers and electricity customers dish out more than half a billion dollars a year to subsidize green power, spurring thousands of jobs in research, sales, design and installation.

But the state is missing out on a richer vein of jobs in green manufacturing, as companies go out of state or leave the country in search of lower costs and government incentives.

The state boasts the highest number of green technology patents, 450 registered between 2007 and 2009, according to a recent state Senate report. California captured 57 percent of the $4.9 billion in venture capital funding invested in clean technology nationwide in 2011.

Read the whole story

What does Memorial Day mean to you?

Opinion: Bigelow should be elected to state Senate

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the May 14, 2012, Modesto Bee.***

In touting the new system for electing legislators and congressional representatives in California, advocates emphasized that the top two vote-getters might well be from the same party. This prediction could very well come true in the 5th Assembly District, a heavily Republican district that stretches from South Lake Tahoe to south of Mammoth Lakes, with a toe boot into Madera County.



The district sprawls across nine counties and well over half of the geography is within a national forest or park. Two-thirds of the population is white and this area supported the Republican candidates in the last gubernatorial and presidential elections.

If voter registration were not enough of an edge, two Republicans in this race have the most money and endorsements and highest name recognition. They are Madera County Supervisor and rancher Frank Bigelow and San Andreas

businessman and former legislator Rico Oller.

Oller wants to return to the capitol, where he served in the Assembly from 1996-2000 and in the Senate from 2000 to 2004. Under the current term limits law, if elected he would only be eligible for one more term in the Assembly.

Oller has picked up endorsements from several county central committees in the district and from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. He signed the no-new-taxes pledge and said his primary reason for running is to oppose the state's global warming law, AB 32, which will limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Oller declined the opportunity for an interview with The Bee's editorial board, indicating he either doesn't want or doesn't expect our recommendation.

Regardless, Bigelow stands out to us as the best candidate in this field. As a county supervisor, he is painfully aware of how the actions and inactions in Sacramento have affected local governments. Bigelow has the endorsement of several Republican legislators from the region, including Tom Berryhill and Anthony Cannella, whose Senate districts include parts of the 5th Assembly District, and Assemblywoman Kristin Olsen, whose current 25th Assembly District includes Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. Far more than Oller, Bigelow appears willing to work with moderates and conservatives on behalf of the district

El Dorado and Madera counties have by far the largest number of registered voters in this district and both those central committees supported Bigelow. The rancher also won a key endorsement from the California Farm Bureau.

Read the whole story

Bleak budget news for LTUSD; busing upsets parents

By Kathryn Reed

Saying no to the governor's tax plan on the November ballot will mean a $1.6 million hit to Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

Because of union contracts layoffs at that point aren't an option even if the school board wanted to entertain that idea.

What Gov. Jerry Brown has told districts is in addition to cutting the school year by the already allowed five days, 15 more for a total of 20 are allowed to be wiped off the calendar.



Fewer Lake Tahoe Unified school buses will be on the roads in the 2012-13 school year. Photo/LTN file

To make ends meet in the worst case scenario, LTUSD would need to cut the 2012-13 school year by 12 days to absorb the cash flow gap from the state.

“They haven’t give us any other choice,” Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News* during a break at the May 22 board meeting.

If necessary, that decision would come after the Nov. 6 election when classes are under way.

CFO Deb Yates presented the board and a room full of people the district’s budget update based on what the governor proposed in his May revise last week.

“I’m absolutely flabbergasted people keep holding their positions when they keep missing the numbers,” Yates said of state employees.

The state budget deficit is $15.7 billion, up from $9.2 billion.

She was in Sacramento on Monday with colleagues getting briefed on what the governor and Legislature intend to do when it comes to funding K-12.

“There is a lot of confusion in how the numbers are rolled out. They are not funding us,” Yates said.

Now on the table is the “weighted student formula” which creates four categories of funding based on grade level instead of the current scenario where districts are given the same amount of money for each student.

“I don’t know how they think it costs less to educate K-6 than others,” Yates said.

The categories are K-3 ($5,466 per average daily attendance), 4-6 ($4,934), 7-8 ($5,081), and 9-12 ($5,887).

She said based on that formula, LTUSD would lose an additional $200,000.

What brought the masses out Tuesday night was the threat to

transportation. Nine people – parents, students, drivers – spoke about the need to ensure students are safe and that the environment is a consideration if more cars were put on the streets.

Parent Alice Jones said with not having all of the Plan C transportation documents on the district's website, it created a lack of transparency. The deleted bus stop document was not available until the morning of the meeting, thus not giving people ample time to review it. She asked for the board to table the vote until the public had time to go over the ideas.

The board didn't seem to care about transparency based on the fact not one of them made reference to when the plan was available to the public.

At the end of public comment, board President Wendy David said, "We have no intention of not getting your child to school safely on a bus, but we have a fiduciary responsibility to keep the schools open."

Plan C (A and B were presented at the May 1 meeting) calls for eliminating 39 bus stops compared to 86 in other scenarios. Two buses instead of one would be used to get Bijou students home. Gone would be the potential for a 75-minute ride, and instead it would be closer to 50 minutes.

The long walks to bus stops are mostly eliminated. Stops in the Tahoe Keys, Al Tahoe and Sierra Tract neighborhoods have been restored.

It is likely to be more crowded on buses because routes have been eliminated.

The district now runs 12 full-size buses that can seat 84 and four smaller buses with a capacity of 20. The smaller buses are used for special education students. Starting in the fall there will bet 10 full size buses and two smaller ones.

The board requested the transportation department give another presentation after the first month of school to report on how the changes are working.

In other action:

• Board member Sue Novasel asked for a future agenda be targeted to discussing school district owned ball fields and how Title IX may be related to them.

Elementary Track & Field Classic

The 8th edition of the South Shore 4-5 Elementary Track & Field Classic is June 5 at at South Tahoe Middle School

This meet will include girls and boys from throughout the region.

In 2011 more than 500 parents and friends witnessed 400 student-athletes compete, with seven meet records broken.

The event is from 4-8pm. The cost is $4 for adults and free to kids.

Utah may provide California with answers to 4-day workweek

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

As Gov. Jerry Brown and labor unions negotiate to put state workers on a four-day, 38-hour workweek to cut payroll costs, they could learn a lot by looking east – to Utah.

The Beehive State's workforce went to a "four-tens" week in 2008. Then-Gov. Jon Huntsman, a Republican, launched the program aiming to save $3 million annually in state operating costs by shutting down on Fridays.

The savings didn't materialize. Lawmakers ended the program last year over the objections of Huntsman's successor, GOP Gov. Gary Herbert.

In between, agencies didn't live up to promises they made to track the Working 4 Utah program. A state audit of the compressed workweek's impact paints a portrait of government struggling to hold itself accountable, groping to measure how the policy affected the productivity of 17,000 state employees.

"Very few departments tracked that," said Tim Osterstock of the Legislative Auditor General's Office, which issued a 2010 report on the program.

California's proposal differs somewhat from Utah's because it is designed to save money by cutting hours. Still, its experiment offers lessons for this state about the intersection of workplace policy and human behavior.

Utah employees, who hadn't received raises in several years, resisted the change at first but eventually embraced it, said

Todd Sutton, employee representative with the the Utah Public Employees' Association. The amount of leave employees took fell 4 percent during the program's first year.

Nearly 60 percent of Utah state employees told auditors they strongly agreed with the statement, "The nature of my work lends itself to a productive 10-hour day." Eight in 10 said they preferred the four 10-hour days per week. Only 10 percent said the compressed schedule made child care more difficult.

"Day care centers and businesses adjusted," Sutton said. "Nearly everybody did."

Still, about 4,000 Utah workers didn't switch to the new schedule because their jobs wouldn't allow it.

Read the whole story

Event geared toward front line staff learning what businesses have to offer

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber/CVB/Resort Association is hosting its annual Summer Recreation lunch June 7, noon to 3pm, with registration beginning at 11:30am at West Shore Café and Inn in Homewood.

This event is geared to provide insight about summer happenings, including events, festivals and activities, to front line, front desk and concierge employees, along with business owners and managers. Attendees may give a brief presentation at the event, as well as provide 80 brochures or other pieces of collateral to be distributed during the

luncheon. This event sells out with approximately 100 attending, so early sign ups are recommended. Deadline to register is June 4. Cost is $29/person.

For more information about the event, to register or provide collateral, call North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Manager Deanna Frumenti at (530) 581.8764 or deanna@puretahoenorth.com.

Taco Bell gives thousands of dollars to Tahoe Boys & Girls clubs

Taco Bell franchisee Chris Walsh presented $15,000 in grant funds to two Boys & Girls Club in Lake Tahoe. The North Lake Tahoe club was given $10,000 and South Lake Tahoe one $5,000.

Walsh and partners Bill and Mary Lou Mullin own Taco Bell restaurants in the Tahoe region and are longtime supporters of Boys & Girls clubs.

North Lake Tahoe plans to use the funding to support its college prep program for teen members. This summer participants will go on a three-day Bay Area college tour. In the fall, the grant funding will support the club's SAT test preparation programs which include test prep curriculum, staff mentoring and test fee support for teens hoping to attend college.

Some of the grant money will also be used to support the club's "Career Launch" program which prepares teens for

entering the workplace by assisting them with resumes, mock interviews and teaching workplace etiquette.

In South Lake Tahoe, the funding will support two initiatives – "Be Great: Graduate" program and the "College Bound" program.

"Be Great: Graduate" targets middle and high school students to encourage and support them in completing high school. "College Bound" exposes students to area colleges through field trips and contact with current college students. The idea is encourage students to complete high school and to plant the seed the college attendance is a real possibility.

Reduced fee for one day to throw away large items

Clean Tahoe's annual Community Cleanup Day is June 2 from 8am-4pm.

Drop off furniture, tires and appliances at the South Tahoe Refuse transfer station (2140 Ruth Ave.) for a discounted price of $5 per truckload for El Dorado County residents on the South Shore, and for $10 for South Shore Nevada residents.

Free secure document shredding and free e-waste disposal is

also being offered.

Refrigerators are accepted at the reduced price of $15 per refrigerator.

Vail Resort’s Echo charitable giving program, Clean Tahoe Program is a partner in the program this year.

Douglas County libraries launching summer reading program

“Dream Big, Read” is the theme of this year’s Summer Reading Program for kids at the Douglas County Public Library.

Registration starts June 1 at the Minden and Zephyr Cove libraries. The program continues through July 21.

The Summer Reading kick-off event is June 5 at 5pm at C.V.I.C. Hall in Minden. Usborne Books will present a book fair again this year. Books for all ages will be available. Purchases help buy new books for the library.

Gbozé shares the roots of their history and culture through traditional West African drum and dance at 6:30pm. Learn about instruments, dances, and masks; join in the simple rhythms and dancing. Children and adults will enjoy this interactive, energetic program.

The Douglas County Library Foundation will host an Ice Cream

Social from 7:15 to 8pm. For more information, go online or call (775) 782.9841.