Nevada losing millions of dollars not collected from online sales

By Anne Knowles, Nevada News Bureau

Nevada could take in $16 million less in tax dollars this year due to online sales, according to a new report by the Retail Association of Nevada.

Sales tax currently accounts for 28.3 percent of the state's general fund revenue while gaming taxes bring in 23.6 percent. Nevada ranks 11th in the nation in terms of sales tax reliance, according to a Congressional Research Service report, while the state's maximum sales tax rate, 8.1 percent in Clark County, ranks 20th.

According to RAN, Internet sales means Nevada will lose upwards of $16 million in 2011, with other reports estimating as much $100 million lost annually. The Economic Forum forecasts the state will collect about $815.3 million in sales and use tax in 2011.

"As e-commerce becomes increasingly popular, Nevada faces ever greater sales and use tax revenue losses," Mary Lau, RAN president, said in a statement on the findings. "Current estimates may only predict losses equivalent to 0.5 percent of total sales and use tax collections, but the impacts are certain to grow larger with time."

Technically, buyers are supposed to pay a use tax with the state for purchases made online, but many consumers are either not aware of the tax or rarely pay it and is almost impossible for the tax department to monitor.

"It's an odd tax, because the costs of compliance are actually

higher than the costs of evasion," said Geoff Lawrence, deputy director of policy at Nevada Policy Research Institute in Las Vegas. "One alternative could be to require online retailers to email shoppers at the end of each year with their total purchase amount throughout the year and informing them of their total use tax liability, directing them to remit the use tax directly to the Nevada Department of Taxation. An alternative like this would get around many problems while still protecting the privacy of individuals."

Lawrence said states have no authority to collect sales tax from entities that have no physical presence in the state.

A bill amendment to tax online retailers failed during the 2011 Nevada legislative session.

Nevada is a member of the Streamlined Sales Tax Governing Board, a national effort to reduce the complexity of sales tax compliance so online retailers could be required to charge state sales on their goods sold.

Concealed weapon permits increase dramatically in El Dorado County

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The number of people with concealed weapon licenses in Sacramento and El Dorado counties has jumped in 2011, following the election of new sheriffs who vowed to make the licenses easier to get.



Sacramento County sheriff's officials issued 739 CCWs – licenses to carry a concealed weapon – as of July 25 this year, more than four times the number issued in all of 2010.

That year about 175 licenses were issued.

In El Dorado County, 380 people received CCWs in the first six months of the year, already a 75 percent increase over 2010's total of 217 permits.

"I made no secret about my philosophy," Sacramento Sheriff Scott Jones said. "I was more permissive on whether I would allow them."

People are "very appreciative of the streamlined process," said El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini.

In both counties, elections for sheriff were dominated by the weapons permit issue. Critics of concealed weapon permits were scarce.

Read the whole story

Incline youth found safe; back with family

Updated Sept. 5 2:45pm:

Sam Singer has been found in good health. He has been reunited with his family.

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An 11-year-old Incline Village boy has been missing since Saturday.

Sam Singer was reported missing by his mother. The boy was last seen in the area of Laura Court and Dorcey Drive at approximately noon Sept. 3.

Officials now believe the boy ran away after a fight with his parents.



Sam Singer

Sam is approximately 5-foot-4, 105 pounds, with blond hair and blue eyes. He was last seen wearing a red polo style shirt, blue shorts, black shoes, a backpack, and possibly carrying a tent and sleeping bag.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Sam or who can provide information on this case, is asked to call (775) 832.9276.

Reid’s alma mater names academic center after him

By Mark Havnes, Salt Lake City Tribune

CEDAR CITY, Utah – One of the most powerful politicians in the country was at Southern Utah University on Thursday reminiscing about his time at the school he graduated from in 1959 and being recognized with an academic center named in his honor.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was invited to the Cedar City university, which has named its new Center for Outdoor Engagement after the Nevada Democrat.

When he heard the name of the center, Reid joked: "I thought it was a place where young students could be romantic."

The center will work for the preservation of natural, cultural and historical resources on public lands, further develop public lands alliances with the university, conduct research and service projects and make SUU a national center for the applied study of parks and public lands.

Reid touted his congressional record on public lands in Nevada, noting the creation of the Great Basin National Park, designating wilderness areas and a summit held every year on the clarity of water in Lake Tahoe, which Nevada shares with California.

When asked about those in Utah who believe the federal government has too much power over public lands and want ownership to revert to local control, even if it means invoking eminent domain, Reid had harsh words.

"They need a mental examination," he said. "It is just political drivel."

He said many of the public lands issues were challenged in the 1970s and 1980s during the "Sagebrush Rebellion," a conservative movement that failed to influence federal environmental policies.

Read the whole story

Caltrans spending $11 billion on California highways

By Gary Richards, San Jose Mercury News

Kelly McDonough was in for a pleasant surprise when she turned onto Interstate 880 in San Jose recently during the morning commute. The bumps, potholes and deep cracks that for years have lined this dilapidated freeway between Interstate 280 and Highway 101 were gone – replaced by dreamy, dark asphalt.



"The road surface is magically improved," McDonough said. "Great job!"

Highways from the Bay Area to Lake Tahoe to the Central Coast are being repaved this summer at a pace not seen in years, even though the state and nation are coming out of a deep recession with major budget problems.

Spurred by an infusion of federal stimulus money, state bonds and millions of dollars in savings from low bids, segments of nearly every local freeway are being resurfaced, plus much of Interstates 5 and 80. Head out for a nighttime drive and you'll almost certainly run into a cone zone.

"There is a near-record amount of Caltrans activity going on right now, nearly $11 billion statewide," said Russell Snyder, executive director of the California Asphalt Pavement Association.

He said Caltrans has been able to pave rough roads that might otherwise be on a long waiting list because of savings on bid

prices of about 30 percent – “the silver lining to the Great Recession,” Snyder called it.

There is more at play, say numerous transportation officials. The condition of California’s highways is among the worst in the nation, with just 28 percent rated in good condition. There’s an urgency to fix them now, when money is available, rather than pay much more for bigger repairs down the road.

Read the whole story

Labor Day fireworks signal the end of summer in Tahoe

While the three-day weekend continues, most of the festivities in the Lake Tahoe Basin are wrapped up.



Fireworks light up the sky Sept. 4 on the South Shore. Photos/Howie Nave

That means instead of the manufactured fun, it’s all about

enjoying the beaches, hiking trails, mountain bike routes and golf courses in the area. With temperatures expected to be in the high 70s and low 80s all week, it's still summer in Tahoe. But with overnight lows dipping into the 30s, the feel of fall is definitely in the air.

Once again the Tahoe Queen won the annual paddle-wheel race over the M.S. Dixie II. In years past when the two boats were not owned by the same company – Aramark – there was a bit more rivalry. Pirate boats have been spotted in the past trying to mess with the competition. This is the 19th year the boats have raced on the South Shore

The fireworks on Sunday night, while not quite as long as the Fourth of July display, still filled the pitch black night sky



with a dramatic



display of pyrotechnic magic.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Lake Tahoe temple to install rabbi

Evon Yakar will be installed as rabbi of Temple Bat Yam in South Lake Tahoe in a two-day ceremony Sept. 16-17.

The weekend will include two of Yakar's colleagues and friends, Rabbi Bonnie Koppell on Friday night and Rabbi Ken

Kanter on Saturday night.

Koppell serves the U.S. Army as chaplain colonel in addition to being the rabbi of Temple Chai in Phoenix. Rabbi Kanter is director of the Rabbinical School at



Evon Yakar

Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

Events at Temple Bat Yam:

Sept. 16

6:30pm pot luck happy hour reception.

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat service with Rabbi Evon Yakar and special guest Rabbi Bonnie Koppell.

Sept. 17

10am Shabbat hike and service; meet at the parking lot on the corner of Highway 50 and Kahle Drive for a walk through the meadow to Nevada Beach. Bring water and snack.

11am For those not able to walk with us, we will meet at the pay station at Nevada Beach for a service on the beach.

6:30pm Join Rabbi Evon Yakar and Rachel for dinner at the temple. You must RSVP by Sept. 13. Call Charna at (775) 901.6114 or email alersach@aol.com.

7:15pm Havdalah and program with Rabbi Ken Kanter. An evening filled with music and fun. Donation of $18 per person at door.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Daisy is a very nice silver and white shorthaired cat who needs to live indoors.



She has never been around dogs, but she has lived happily with small children and other cats. She came to the shelter with Lily when their owner couldn't look after them any more.

Daisy is spayed, microchipped, 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.

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

9/11-themed wines making some

families sick at the thought

By Mike Jaccarino, New York Daily News

A 9/11-themed wine – created to help fund raise for the Ground Zero memorial – has victims' families seeing red.

Lieb Family Cellars of Mattituck, L.I., says it will donate up to 10% of each sale of the 9/11 Memorial Commemorative Merlot and 9/11 Memorial Commemorative Chardonnay to the National September 11 Memorial and Museum.

But critics say the pittance doesn't justify the tackiness on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

"What's next? A 9/11 pastrami sandwich?" asked Councilman Peter Vallone Jr., D-Queens.

"I don't care about the small amount that they donate to charity. If anyone is profiting off of 9/11, then this wine leaves a very bad taste in my mouth."

Retailers will pocket $6 from each bottle sold – at the tasteless price of $19.11.

Lieb Family Cellars says it will donate every cent not spent on making the wine – an estimated $1.15 to $1.91 per bottle.

Read the whole story

Nevada looking to cash in on

unredeemed slot tickets

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A proposed regulation to divert most of the money from unredeemed slot machine tickets to the state took another step forward Tuesday.

The state Gaming Control Board held a workshop on the preliminary regulation that could mean millions dollars more for the state treasury.

Board Chairman Mark Lipparelli said he was surprised no one showed up to testify about the proposal. The proposal drew spirited opposition from the Nevada Resort Association and other casino representatives during the last Legislature.

By one estimate, it could mean $43 million now being kept by the casinos would go to the state.

Slot players routinely put cash in machines and receive a printed ticket for their balance when finished playing. Mostly gone are the days when coins were used in the one-armed bandits.

Read the whole story