Nevada ends fight to ban gay marriage

By Jonathan Kami, Reuters

Nevada dropped its defense of a state ban on gay marriage on Monday, saying the U.S. legal landscape had changed and its arguments in support of a voter-approved ban on same-sex nuptials were no longer sustainable.

The move, made by the state's Democratic attorney general with the support of its Republican governor, does not legalize gay marriage in Nevada but removes the state as an opponent of those fighting to overturn the ban in federal court.

State Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto said that after careful review, the state had filed a motion to withdraw a brief it filed last month in support of the ban in a case pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit.

Read the whole story

Sarah Burke inspires freeskiing Olympians

By Elliott Almond, San Jose Mercury News

KRASNAYA POLYANA, Russia – It was difficult not to cringe as Canadian freeskier Yuki Tsubota bounced off the icy slopes Tuesday at Rosa Khutor Extreme Park.

It was difficult not to think of Sarah Burke, a Canadian

pioneer whose campaign propelled the women's freeski movement.

"We wouldn't be here if not for her," said Canada's Dara Howell, who won the women's slopestyle gold medal Tuesday with a flying first run no one could touch.

Tsubota escaped serious injury but in a high-risk sport the question always lingers after a horrific crash.

It lingers because Burke's fatal day two years ago makes it impossible not to.

The four-time X Games champion died nine days after a training crash in Park City, a potent reminder of the dangers of flinging off jumps while attached to skis and snowboards.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Are you a paid subscriber to *Lake Tahoe News*? If not, here is the paid subscriber form. Your contribution keeps the news flowing every day; after all, *LTN* is the only place to get news about Lake Tahoe seven days a week. The first 10 people to send in $25 or more will also receive a *Lake Tahoe News* T-shirt. Just put your shirt size on the form.

• Truckee has funding available for two economic development programs. More info is online.

• The Rahlves' Banzai Tour returns to Kirkwood Feb. 22-23.

• Sports America Tours lists Heavenly Mountain Resort as one

of the top five most romantic ski resorts.

Teter misses podium; 2 U.S. medals in halfpipe

It was nearly a sweep for the U.S. women in halfpipe in Sochi on Wednesday.

Hannah Teter of Meyers just missed the podium as she placed fourth with a score of 90.50. She nailed that on her first run. She fell on her second.

Teter, who rides for Sierra-at-Tahoe, was sitting in silver medal contention with only a handful of riders to go. In 2006, Teter earned a gold in halfpipe in Turin, and in 2010 she road to silver in Vancouver.

Kaitlyn Farrington of Salt Lake City brought home the gold with a score of 91.75. Elijah Teter coaches Farrington and his sister, Hannah Teter.

Torah Bright of Australia on Feb. 12 took silver with a 91.50.

Kelly Clark of Vermont, but who rides for Mammoth, duplicated her Vancouver efforts with a bronze at these Winter Games.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Northstar rider questions slopestyle judging

By Jeffrey Weidel, Examiner

Although Lake Tahoe snowboarder Chas Guldemond loved competing in Sochi, he can't help but think – what if the judging was easier to understand for competitors?

Guldemond missed the finals after finishing seventh in the semifinals on Saturday, posting a score of 79.75. But Guldemond felt like he performed well, successfully landing a difficult triple cork – three flips. Yet Guldemond, who calls Northstar his home resort, missed out on the top four who advanced to the finals by a full five points.

While not complaining about his individual score, Guldemond said he still isn't sure what the Olympic judges wanted.

The 2014 Winter Olympics uses judges that are from the International Ski Federation (FIS), and they typically judge World Cup events. Guldemond, a member of the World Snowboard Tour board of directors, believes the tour brings judges in three times a year to update them the state of the sport. But the FIS does not.

Read the whole story

Study: Nevada failing poor

students

By Paul Takahashi, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada fails to provide adequate school funding to poor children, according to a national report.

Every two years, the Education Law Center publishes a report card that grades states on how fairly they distribute per-pupil funding to schools.

Education researchers at Rutgers University in New Jersey looked at several indicators to determine whether a state provides school funding fairly. These indicators ranged from how much state and local tax revenue is devoted to education to how much school funding goes to poor children.

Nevada received an overall grade of "F," based on Rutgers researchers' analysis.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe blackbirds die from strychnine

By Kathryn Reed

A flock of birds in South Lake Tahoe was thinned out after ingesting strychnine.

Stella McMillin, senior environmental scientist with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife Service, said it is not known if the poisoning was intentional.

El Dorado County Animal Services was called Jan. 28 regarding a large number of dead birds on the ground. Officers found 34 dead Brewer's Blackbirds in the Tahoe Keys near the intersection of Lassen Drive and Tuolumne Drive.



Blackbirds – and Mourning Doves – on the back deck of LTWC co-founder Bob Dietz. Photo/Bob Dietz

One bird was alive. Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care was able to rehab it, even though it was in convulsions when it was brought in. It was released Feb. 4.

A flock of more than 150 of these birds was seen in the area in late January. They were feeding in people's yards.

"Why someone would cast it out in their yard and kill birds is beyond my comprehension," Cheryl Millham, executive director of LTWC, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Don't let your dog lick anything off the ground. A cat, raccoon, coyote that would eat one of the birds that died of this would have secondary poisoning."

McMillin said the only legal use for strychnine is to control pocket gophers by putting the poison under ground in their burrows.

"Either someone did an application incorrectly and put it above ground or they intentionally were poisoning blackbirds,"

McMillin told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The state agriculture commissioner will conduct an investigation to try to determine who was responsible for the poisoning. At a minimum, McMillin said her department would come out with advice for people who live in the area about using chemicals that can end up targeting household pets and wildlife who were not the intended victims.

Poisoning animals is a crime.

“At this time, animal services does not know how the birds may have ingested the poison; they did not find any evidence of poisoning in the area where the birds were found,” according to Maggie Williams, spokeswoman for animal services.

Millham said if people have issues with gophers, she has a non-toxic solution she will share. For more info, call (530) 577.2273 or email tom@ltwc.org.

Mancuso 8th in downhill; U.S. women don’t medal

The U.S. women were not able to claim any medals in downhill in Sochi on Wednesday.

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley, who earlier this week claimed bronze in the super combined, was not able to duplicate her efforts. Four years ago she took silver in the downhill at the Vancouver Games.

Mancuso finished in eighth place on Feb. 12 with a time of 1:42.56.

Tying for gold were Tina Maze of Slovenia and Dominique Gisin of Switzerland. They each had a time of 1:41.57. Taking bronze was Lara Gut of Switzerland, at 1:41:67.

Other U.S. finishers:

• Laurenne Ross of Bend, Ore., 11th place, 1:42.68.

• Stacey Cook of Mammoth, 17th place, 1:43.05.

• Jacqueline Wiles of Aurora, Ore., 26th place 1:44.35.

The weather in Sochi has been getting warmer and the conditions declining. The training run for the downhill had been canceled to preserve the integrity of the course.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Opinion: Retirement security takes planning

By Jason Zweig, Washington Post

By creating a new savings plan this past week called the myRA, President Obama refocused attention on the retirement crisis.

While the myRA is a small step in the right direction, particularly for lower-income Americans, tens of millions of people remain trillions of dollars short of the savings they will need to fund their retirement.

The solution is simple, but it isn’t easy. Americans need to save more – not just a little more, but vastly more, according to a new study by two leading investment analysts.

To be assured of having enough money to fund a comfortable retirement, you should save a total of 22 times the annual income you want to earn when you retire. That is higher than many previous estimates, but it offers near-certainty of hitting your target.

Read the whole story

LTUSD employees granted series of raises

Employees of Lake Tahoe Unified School District will soon have a heftier paycheck.

The board of education on Feb. 11 approved 3 percent raises for certificated and classified workers that are retroactive to July 1. Another increase takes effect July 1, 2014. That comes in the form of a 6.5 percent raise. The contract, though, goes through June 30, 2016.

For certificated staff two staff development days will be eliminated in the 2014-15 school year. This means they will work 182 days, plus one professional development day.

Representatives from both unions shared their appreciation for the cooperative negotiating process. Board members in turn praised the quality of teaching and work of staff.

“Everyone agreed we are coming out of some dark times into some light,” board President Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report