Voters have distinct choices in Jan. 4 special state Senate election

By Susan Ferriss, Sacramento Bee

Voters in one of California's most conservative bastions, the 1st Senate District, will cast ballots Tuesday in a special runoff election to replace state Sen. Dave Cox, a Republican who died last July.

It's an obscure date for an election, turnout will likely be small, and political insiders say the victor is all but certain.

GOP voters have an 11-point registration advantage over Democrats in the district which includes parts of Sacramento County, all of Placer and El Dorado counties and stretches to the Oregon border.

That gives Republican Ted Gaines, 52, an indisputable leg up over his Democratic rival, Rancho Cordova Mayor Ken Cooley, 57.

But 18 percent of the district's voters are nonpartisan and Cooley could benefit from Gaines coming under attack by GOP rivals during a November primary fight for the Senate seat.

Read the whole story

Caltrans working on roads in Sierra

Click on road work to find out where Caltrans will be working in the Sierra Nevada for the week of Jan. 3.9.

Vegas wants in on Super Bowl; where’s Tahoe?

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Executives with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and its contracted advertising agency, R&R Partners, will meet early this month to determine if the cityâ€™s popular â€œWhat happens here, stays hereâ€ television ads can be aired during the Super Bowl.

Other tourism companies say theyâ€™re working to capitalize on the National Football Leagueâ€™s modified ad policy that would lift a ban that prevented cities with legalized gambling to run TV spots during the NFLâ€™s postseason.

This yearâ€™s Super Bowl on Feb. 7 will be played in Miami, and the NFLâ€™s postseason begins Jan. 9.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 2



All resorts but Kirkwood are open today. Read the Feature story on LTN to learn more about what is going on at Kirkwood. Read the Outdoor-Sports section to see how the skiing was at Sierra-at-Tahoe on New Year's Day. Here is the ski report brought to you by Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Genoa driver returning to Daytona

Ron Levanduski, Star Gazette

Davy Jones is thankful he's in good health and has another opportunity to prove himself on the racetrack.

The former McGraw, N.Y.-resident, who won the world's two top 24 Hour sports car events at Le Mans and Daytona in the 1990s, will return to the Rolex 24 at Daytona for the first time in 17 years. He'll drive a top-line GT-class Corvette in next month's 48th running of the Grand-Am Rolex Series race.

Jones, 45, who lives near Lake Tahoe, is one of four drivers who will race the No. 07 Godstone Ranch Motorsports Corvette C6.R in the prestigious race on Jan. 30.

Read the whole story

U.S. Olympic halfpipe contenders ready to tackle Mammoth



By Lindsey Sine, USSA

MAMMOTH – Following an opening event that took halfpipe riding to new realms of creativity, Mammoth Mountain welcomes the 2010 Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix Jan. 6-10 for two full field halfpipe competitions. The event will help determine the roster of the U.S. Olympic halfpipe team.

Known for being the only resort in North America to offer three different-sized halfpipes, Mammoth's 22-foot super pipe will give athletes their last two competitions in which they can qualify for a spot in the reduced field at the final tour stop where the Olympic team will be named.

The men's field looks to again be stacked by all who can land double corks. The one and only Shaun White (Carlsbad, CA) won the first stop of the Grand Prix with a double double corked run, and Louie Vito (Sandy, UT) was right on the gold medalist's heels with his own variations of the trick.

Also looking to attach the phrase 2010 Olympian to their name will be hometown heros Greg Bretz and Luke Mitrani (both Mammoth Lakes, CA) and wildcard Zach Black (Breckenridge, CO) who took third at the first stop of the Grand Prix in Copper, CO.

In the women's field Kelly Clark (Mt. Snow, VT) is her usual dominating self this season. After taking the win in Copper Mountain, she is looking to throw down in Mammoth. Joining her

will be partners in crime Gretchen Bleiler (Aspen, CO), who was second at the tour's first stop, and reigning Olympic gold medalist Hannah Teter (South Lake Tahoe, CA).

Taking the competition up a notch in the women's field are Olympian Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe, CA), Ellery Hollingsworth (Stratton, VT) and U.S. Snowboarding rookie Maddy Schaffrick (Steamboat Springs, CO).

The action in Mammoth goes down starting with men's and women's qualifications for the first halfpipe competition on Jan. 5. Finals for the first pipe competition take place on the sixth, then, after a little break, qualifications for the second pipe will take place on Jan. 8 with finals on the Jan. 9. Slopestyle will cap things off at Mammoth on Jan.10.

If you can't catch the action in person, look for the future of the U.S. Olympic team appearing in the U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix show on a TV near you Jan. 10 on NBC at 10:30am.

Private pilots need to plan ahead to fly to the Games



Flying your own plane to the Winter Games in February? It will take some planning.

Reno-Tahoe International Airport is one of three airports in the U.S. designated as an Olympic Portal airport for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games.

Reno-Tahoe has three fixed based operators to assist pilots headed for the Games.

The reason for the portals is to have a handle on security, manage air space and parking.

Reservations must be made by private or corporate aircraft planning to fly into Vancouver for the Olympics. This can be done at www.2010airportreservations.ca.

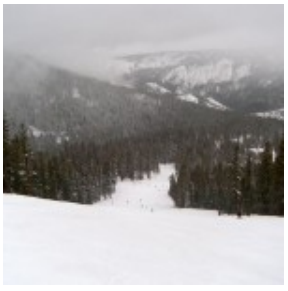
Canadian officials predict nearly 500 aircraft will land in British Columbia each day during the two weeks of the Games.

New Year’s Day on the slopes

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – My iPhone greeted me with the message Sierra had 8 inches of fresh snow in the last 24 hours. A good omen since the New Yearâ€™s Day activity was skiing.

But being the lazy threesome we can be, we didnâ€™t take our first run until 11:30am â€“ and it had nothing to do with the hour we went to bed the night before. It was just nice to sleep in.



Winter weather at Sierra-at-Tahoe on Jan. 1. Photo/Kathryn

Reed

We missed the freshies, but more of it was coming down as we skied much of West Bowl, and a few runs off Grandview. All the bare spots Sue and I had seen four days earlier were covered up Friday.

The snow was great up top, a little sticky closer to the lift lines.

This being my sister Pamâ€™s first day on the slopes we didnâ€™t take her into the trees, but the whooping we heard from others made it sound like even the afternoon it was good. Tracks proved plenty of people had been enjoying the powder earlier in the day.

The crowds were thin by the time we arrived. Last year it was a waiting game on New Yearâ€™s Day. Maybe the rain in South Lake Tahoe was keeping people away. All the better for us.

Mitch Ibsen and Jim Holm of Livermore beat us to the slopes. They had arrived about 9:30am.

â€œAny day is a good day to ski,â€ Holm said as the two took a break for a bite to eat at Grandview Lodge.

The friends said the other 15 in their party back at the cabin are fair weather skiers – and that the previous night’s fun had nothing to do with why they weren’t on the slopes.

Today is apt to be a much better day to ride – at least weather-wise.

Rob, the bartender, told Pam that the wet stuff coming down while we were there was perfect to fill in the spots needing filling in, and as the nighttime temperatures dropped the light, fluffy stuff would start to fall.

The National Weather Service is calling for partly sunny skies in the Tahoe area through Tuesday.

A cold $6 beer is probably going to be bit more refreshing today since temps could hit the 40s.

Barton Memorial Hospital welcomes New Year's Day baby



By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's first baby of the new year is actually a Gardnerville baby.

Yoni Lopez was born at 12:54pm New Year's Day at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Mom, Cindy, was resting comfortably when *Lake Tahoe News* tried to reach her a few hours later. Dad, Guilmer, sounded proud as he talked about his third child. But he also admitted that by the time No. 3 three comes along, it's all rather routine.

Guilmer Lopez said his newborn son, with all of his hair, looks like his 7-year-old sister at this early stage. Yoni also has a 12-year-old brother.

Yoni didn't have any competition to be the New Year's baby because his mom was the only one in labor Jan. 1.

In 2009, the first Barton baby didn't arrive until Jan. 4. It was Jan. 2 the year before.

The custom is to take the New Year’s baby’s footprint for the hospital’s wall.

A gift basket is also usually part of the tradition, though hospital officials said the basket is still being assembled.

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12 arrests in Stateline on New Year’s Eve

Douglas County sheriffâ€™s authorities report no major incidents at the New Year’s Eve celebration at Stateline.

Eight people were arrested in the casino core area of during the evening. Charges included disorderly conduct, trespassing, provoking a breach of peace, battery and public nudity.

Four people were arrested outside of the casino core area for crimes of DUI, disorderly conduct, domestic battery and destruction of property.

The celebratory crowd seemed no larger than in past years, deputies said. Highway 50 was closed to vehicle traffic from about 10:15pm to 1am.