Sierra Valley cycling event to debut in fall

The inaugural Sierra Valley Gran Fondo cycling event will feature four distances. There's the Mega Fondo at 160 miles, the Gran Fondo is 96 miles, Medio Fondo is 66 miles and the Piccolo Fondo is 33 miles.

The ride is Sept. 21 in the Sierra Valley, north of Truckee.

The ride benefits the Sierra Schools Foundation.

More info is online.

GOP votes split along generational lines

By Jim Puzzanghera, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers in Congress are voting more often along party lines. But within the ranks of Republicans, there is growing evidence of voting along age lines.

The generational split, fueled by a surge in young lawmakers who won seats in recent elections, has been emerging on a number of tax and spending bills, including last year's transportation funding bill and this year's pending farm bill.

And that divide may be deeper even than differences over Tea

Party issues, now that most Republicans in Congress are conservative.

“Clearly, as a group, the younger members coming in the last two or three classes have been more ideologically conservative … than most of the older members,” said Norman J. Ornstein, a congressional expert at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

The tension between young and old was on display at a recent Senate committee hearing over technology companies stashing hoards of cash offshore to avoid paying income taxes on profits earned overseas.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz, 76, criticized Apple Inc. for using foreign subsidiaries to avoid paying billions of dollars in U.S. taxes. But Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., 50, defended Apple as “a great American company” simply trying to find legal ways to minimize its tax bill.

No legislation, however, has brought the generational divide into focus more clearly than the Internet sales tax bill, which would allow states to require larger online retailers to collect sales taxes from customers as bricks-and-mortar merchants must do.

Senate Republicans split nearly evenly on the legislation, with most older members supporting it and younger ones in opposition.

“Every single Republican under the age of 50 voted against this bill in the U.S. Senate, and I think it has a great deal to do with being part of the Internet age,” said freshman Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, 42, a Tea Party favorite. “We should not be messing with the Internet.”

Like most of his older Republican colleagues, Sen. Mike Enzi, 69, who owned three small shoe stores before entering politics in the 1970s, sympathizes with conventional retailers who want

to end the nation’s long online sales tax holiday.

As a former mayor and state legislator, he also knows that states and local municipalities need to collect sales taxes to bolster their budgets and help keep the roads in repair and the sewers working.

“It is pretty hard to flush your toilet on the Internet. Those taxes are very important to almost all of the communities across the United States,” said the Wyoming Republican, who helped pass the Marketplace Fairness Act in the Senate.

Freshman Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., 42, like Cruz one of the young Turks in Congress, opposes the legislation as a threat to e-commerce and an expansion of state taxing powers.

“All of my post-college life has been in a world where the Internet has been a ubiquitous part of our lives,” Massie said.

The opposition of young members such as Massie has left the bill’s fate unclear in the House, where the average age of lawmakers is five years less than in the Senate.

“Younger generations are more e-commerce-oriented,” said Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark., 56, the leading Republican sponsor of the House legislation. “The House is a younger bunch … and that may contribute to the fact that it’s harder to get younger members on board.”

Veteran lawmakers – that is, older ones – are more inclined to support conventional retailers arguing for a level playing field and to back their state and local officials, who want to generate more revenue without raising tax rates.

Younger members, many of whom are Washington newcomers, tend to back Internet companies such as online auction site EBay Inc. in opposing the measure as an undue burden on online retailers and an expansion of a state’s taxing authority

outside its borders.

“I think there is a bit of a divide in Congress between those who understand the potential the Internet has to revolutionize the way we do commerce in this country and those who are trying to protect special interests,” said Evan Feinberg, president of Generation Opportunity.

The libertarian group, which represents young people, launched a protest on Enzi’s Facebook page against the Internet sales tax legislation.

“I applaud that he was a small-business man before he entered public service,” Feinberg said of Enzi. “It’s just that commerce has changed dramatically since he owned that shoe store in 1974.”

Older lawmakers frequently have been criticized for not being technologically savvy. In 2006, then-Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, at 82, was mocked by bloggers for a rambling speech in which he described the Internet as a “series of tubes.”

In the last few years, Congress has seen a flood of younger lawmakers.

The average age of newly elected senators dropped to 53 this year from 57.1 in 2009, according to the Congressional Research Service. The average age of new House members dropped to 49.2 this year from 49.8 in 2009.

In the online sales tax debate, the average age of Republican senators who voted in favor of the bill in May was 64, according to an analysis by Heritage Action for America, a conservative advocacy group. The average age of Republican senators who voted against the bill was 58.

The group noted that 12 of 13 Senate Republicans ages 55 or younger opposed the legislation.

Overall, 22 Senate Republicans voted for the bill and 21 opposed it. The legislation passed 69 to 27, with most Democrats voting for it.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., 45, who is not in the Tea Party caucus, said she hadn't thought about why younger Republicans like her were more likely to oppose the bill. She voted against it because the legislation clashed with her conservative philosophy that government should be smaller and more limited.

Massie, the young congressman from Kentucky, said he thought the generational split on the Internet sales tax and other issues reflected more skepticism among newcomers about Washington's ways.

"It may be that the younger folks haven't been here as long," he said. "They're still in touch with their constituents and less with the constituency inside the beltway – the lobbyists."

David French, senior vice president for government relations at the National Retail Federation, said that many of the Senate Republicans who opposed the legislation did not have experience in state government.

"It's not about technology versus the old way of doing things," said French, whose group has been lobbying for the legislation. "I think this is a lot more about the callow inexperience of youth."

It will take some time to build support in the House, and a lot of small retailers will be contacting their lawmakers over the next few months to push for the legislation, he said. The trade group includes small retailers and large ones, such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., one of the leading backers of the legislation, rejected the idea that supporters, regardless of

party, did not understand the Internet.

“I guessed I’d be on the older side, but I certainly appreciate the immense benefit of the Internet and how important it is in commerce,” said Welch, 66. “But this in no way is going to inhibit the Internet.”

Enzi agreed.

“I’m encouraging every businessman I know to make sales on the Internet,” he said. “But they need to help follow the law, which is to help collect the sales tax that’s due.”

Being a casino lawyer is not just about gaming

By Ed Komenda, Las Vegas Sun

Serving as a general counsel attorney for a major gaming company might be one of the most demanding jobs in the world.

From lawsuits to labor strikes and a lagging economy, the job demands thick skin and endless endurance.

Tim Donovan and Brian Larson are two of the best.

As general counsel for Caesars Entertainment, Donovan and his staff recently won an American Lawyer Media award, naming them one of the best legal departments in the country. Caesars is the parent company of Harrah’s Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

As Boyd Gaming’s lead attorney, Larson has helped the company blossom from a locals casino to a national contender with

properties across the country.

Read the whole story

Lightning strikes much of eastern California



There were 1,754 lightning strikes within California and 1,008 strikes within the National Forests in the state in the 24-hour period ending at 6am July 5.

None of them was in the Tahoe National Forest.

However, the two fires from Wednesday evening, south of Truckee and west of Highway 89, are in patrol status.

No additional lightning is expected today for the TNF.

People make loneliest road a bit more tolerable

By Claire O'Neill, NPR

It's hard to say where the the 287-mile stretch of Nevada's Highway 50 got its nickname "the loneliest road in America." Photographer Ty Wright thinks some writer got clever in a Life article once upon a time – and that it just stuck.

But when he set out on a road trip for a grad school project in photojournalism, Wright was less interested in the origins of the superlative and more curious about its veracity: Is it really the loneliest road? And if so, who actually lives there?

He spent about 10 days exploring the five or so towns that dot the highway – and mostly what's in between: a lot of nothing. His goal as a photographer was to capture how it looks. And to do that, he says, he listened.

"I think people get behind their cameras and start shooting without listening," he says. "If I don't know you, how can I tell [your] story through images? Even with a place. I found myself parking on the side of the road … just listening."

A self-described "people person," Wright says he found himself searching for connections in the most unlikely places. He has tales of ranches and brothels – and accounts of general goodwill from the locals, who seemed more than willing to accept an outsider without questions. But he still had questions: Who are the locals on this lonely road?

"It takes a certain type of person," Wright says. "A strong, self-sustaining kind of person. They have different worries because their neighbor might be 2 miles away. They're a lot more independent. They're their own maintenance men. Their own

proprietors. And they know how to live off the land. The ethic of work," he says, "is just insane."

Of course, one man's "middle of nowhere" is another man's home. Still, why make home on a lonely road?

"There was no consensus," Wright says, "but I think it was just a tie to the community. And a tie to the land. There's something spiritual and really unique to that place. You see the sawtooth edges of the mountains and the sunset stretches clear behind you and it looks like there's two suns. I've never seen anything like that."

Maybe it's easy for a city slicker to say, but these days it seems like having little reception and lots of road is a rare experience. Yet the feeling of isolation, even in (or maybe especially in) the most wired urban areas, is universal. Wright's antidote for travel loneliness contains a universal truth:

"Ultimately I'd say that people make the road not so lonely."

DUI checkpoint ends with 4 arrests

During the July 4 DUI checkpoint in Douglas County four people were arrested on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol and one for marijuana.

The checkpoint was set up on eastbound Highway 50 near Spooner Summit.



Officers stop drivers at the July 4 DUI checkpoint in Douglas County. Photo/Provided

Officers were out from 2-8pm. Reno and Sparks police departments, deputies from the Washoe and Lyon county sheriff's offices, and troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol briefly spoke to each driver of the 3,547 vehicles that were stopped.

Officers also issued traffic citations for all violations observed as motorists were contacted. Those offenses included three for marijuana less than 1 ounce, three for drug paraphernalia, nine child safety seat violations, four seat belt tickets, and seven additional traffic citations for various other violations.

Ten minors were cited for alcohol consumption and their ages ranged from 16- to 20-years-old.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Food-wine event benefits N.

Shore kids group

Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort and Lone Eagle Grille's fourth annual Wine on the Water is Aug. 18 from 1-5pm.

The food and wine festival and charity event brings together more than 25 wineries, more than a dozen local restaurants, and live music.

All proceeds generated from ticket sales and silent auction sales will be donated directly to the Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe. Since the inception of Wine on the Water in 2010, Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe has raised more than $91,000 for the local charity.

Tickets are $65 per person in advance, and $75 at the door. Purchase tickets online.

For more information regarding Wine on the Water, contact Lone Eagle Grille at (775) 886.6889.

Tourists returning to Tahoe reviving economy

By Kathryn Reed

"No vacancy" signs, traffic on the roads midweek, parking lots full. All of these are indicators of an economy that is on the rebound.

There are days, construction aside, when one cannot drive as fast they would like. Even the increase in bikes and pedestrians is slowing down the normal pace.



Beaches like the one at Lake Shore Lodge are always full for the July 4 fireworks. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It hasn't been this way in Tahoe since before the recession.

According to the Bureau of Economic analysis, spending on travel and tourism in the United States is up 6.8 percent in the first three months of this year compared to a year ago.

A report by Dean Runyan Associates said more than 200 million people came to California in 2012 as tourists. Collectively, they spent about $106.4 billion. This is an increase of 3 percent from the $101.8 billion that was spent in 2011.

Pat Ronan, who owns Lake Shore Lodge and Spa in South Lake Tahoe, said everyone he's talked to – from casinos to vacation rentals – is doing better than years past.

"We sell out every year, but this year it was a month in advance," Ronan, who is also chairman of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News* of this weekend.

The three- and four-night minimums that many hotels have for this weekend were not a deterrent.

"There is a huge amount of family business because now the whole family can afford to do it," Ronan said.

Sandy Evans Hall, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association executive director, said 2012 was a great summer for her area

and this summer is tracking to be on par or better.

“Probably our biggest increase now is showing up in September because of Iron Man, Tough Mudder and the food and wine festival,” Hall told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The first two are new events to the North Shore.

Events continue to be an economic boon no matter where they are.

Carol Chaplin, LTVA’s executive director, said events do two things. One, they draw people to that specific event, and the other is the event creates a sense of energy, that Tahoe is a happening place even if that particular event is not of interest or the person can’t make it that day.

Fourth of July is traditionally the busiest time of the year throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. This year is no different. Beaches were full of fireworks enthusiasts last night. The beach at Lake Shore Lodge and Spa was a mass of people with their eyes focused intently on the 25-minute fireworks display that featured 3,500 shells being shot off from three barges.

Tourist officials on the South Shore had predicted upward of 100,000 people could be in town this weekend.

The big difference this year compared to previous years is the advance bookings. The past few years people were all about last-minute travel, now they are planning. This is a sign of confidence in the economy.

Lodging is the first segment of a tourism destination to come back. Then people start eating out more and graduate to more expensive eateries. Then it’s a special event they can afford. Finally, it will be the truly optional items people will open their wallets for – like spa treatments, helicopter rides and shopping.

“For the boats, they are pacing well above where they were

last year," Teri Sweeney with Aramark said of the two paddle-wheelers and 50-passenger Paradise her company operates.

On the Fourth, a third cruise was added for the Paradise. It sold out in 1½ weeks. All of the cruises were sold out yesterday.

Sweeney added that the boat rental business is doing well, too.

People are eating out as well.

"Last year was a record year for Riva, Gar Wood and Bar of America. This year is proving to be as good or better, even in Kings Beach (at Caliente)," Tom Turner told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Turner owns the four restaurants scattered about the greater Lake Tahoe area.

July 3 is traditionally the busiest day for Gar Wood because people are stopping there on their way to the fireworks in Kings Beach. Riva Grill in South Lake and Caliente in Kings Beach are popular viewing platforms on fireworks night.

"People are definitely loosening up, but it is much more calculated these days," Chaplin said. She doubts the visitor who has money to throw will be returning any time soon, but is confident the tide has turned.

Crews making progress on Douglas County fire

Update 11:30pm:

The Bison Fire has grown to 1,400 acres, with approximately 15 percent containment.

No structures have been damaged and no injuries reported.

The fire has moved from the previously threatened structures.

Approximately 220 firefighters are working this blaze. Air support has been suspended for the night.

Hand crews will monitor the fire through the night.

The fire is headed toward the old Ray May and Preacher fires. The direction of the fire has been in a south to southeast direction.

The plan is to fight the fire heavy in the morning with air support, hand crews and engines, before the afternoon weather moves in.

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Update 6:30pm:

The Douglas County fire has been named the Bison Fire. It is 300 acres in size and growing.

Current resources committed to this fire:

22 engines

2 air tankers

3 helicopters

3 dozers

3 water tenders

120 firefighters.

Twenty residents have been either evacuated or have been asked

to evacuate. Additional crews have been ordered.

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A wildland fire is burning out of control in the Pine Nut Mountains east of Gardnerville.

This fire is growing rapidly and its size has not been determined at this time, Douglas County sheriff's deputies report.

The fire was spotted July 4 at 3:30pm.

Homes are threatened by this fire and have been evacuated. This area is closed to non-residents.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Learn to landscape in sustainable manner

There will be a sustainable landscaping workshop on July 16 from 6-8pm at the South Tahoe Public Utility District office.

This free workshop will include information on: water saving technology, water-wise landscaping techniques, turf removal techniques and relandscaping ideas, yard fertility practices for healthier turf and cleaner water, and turf irrigation scheduling and maintenance.

The office is at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.