A day to remember Old Glory

June 14 is proclaimed by the United State as Flag Day. It is a day to remember our flag, Old Glory.

South Lake Tahoe’s Mike Crowley submitted the following poem in honor of today being Flag Day.

Call Me Old Glory, by D. Alsup

Call me Old Glory

Or Stars and Stripes

This Star Spangled Banner

Must flow all night.

I must fly high

amongst the hillside,

Low amongst the grass

Touching every heart string,

Without hitting the grounds I pass.

I must feel the breeze

Go through me

Go around

Up and below,

Feel the freedom I stand for,

To channel it below.

I must hear the calls for freedom

Wipe the tears that flow,

Strengthen the badges of courage

Of those men and women we know,

who fight for right and justice

who toil for honors sake

who represent this flag

For this United States.

Crews contain West Shore blaze to 1 acre



The General Creek area of Sugar Pine Point is where a fire burned Thursday. Photo/LTN file

A 1-acre fire in the General Creek area of Sugar Pine Point State Park on Thursday sent off alarms throughout the basin.

While CalFire was the lead agency, with the primary back up by

the U.S. Forest Service, it was a reminder of how quickly agencies want to douse any flames in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Several trucks responded to the West Shore blaze to ensure it did not spread farther.

The day before crews battled a 15-acre blaze just outside the basin near the top of Kingsbury Grade. Wind was a factor in both fires.

Forest Service officials told *Lake Tahoe News* that lightning is the probable cause of the June 13 fire. No official cause of the King Fire has been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Rise in number of people in U.S. graduating from college

By Catherine Rampell, New York Times

WASHINGTON – The number of Americans graduating from college has surged in recent years, sending the share with a college degree to a new high, federal data shows.

The surge follows more than two decades of slow growth in college completion, which caused the United States to fall behind other countries and led politicians from both parties, including President Obama, to raise alarms.

Last year, 33.5 percent of Americans ages 25 to 29 had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 24.7 percent in 1995, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In 1975, the share was 21.9 percent. The number of two-year college degrees, master's degrees and doctorates has also

risen recently.

The increases appear to be driven by a sharp rise in college enrollment and by an improvement among colleges in graduating students. The trends could bring good news in future years, economists say, as more Americans become qualified for higher-paying jobs as the economy recovers.

College attendance has increased in the past decade partly because of the new types of jobs that have been created in the digital age, which have increased the wage gap between degree holders and everyone else. The recent recession, which pushed more workers of all ages to take shelter on college campuses while the job market was poor, has also played a role.

“Basically, I was just barely getting by, and I didn’t like my job, and I wanted to do something that wasn’t living dollar to dollar,” said Sarah O’Doherty, 24, a former nail salon receptionist who will graduate next month from the County College of Morris in New Jersey with a degree in respiratory therapy. “After I had my son, I wanted to do something I felt passionate about, to have a career.”

The attainment of bachelor’s degrees has risen much faster for young women in the past decade than for young men. It has also risen among young whites, blacks and Hispanics, though relatively little among Asians, who already had the highest rate of college completion. The share of people with a college degree also varies tremendously by state, with 48.1 percent of people ages 25 to 34 in Massachusetts holding a bachelor’s degree, but just 20.4 percent in Nevada, according to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, a research and development center founded to improve management at colleges.

Despite the recent improvement, higher education experts emphasized that college completion rates were still distressingly low, with only about half of first-time college

freshmen who enrolled in 2006 having graduated by 2012, according to the National Student Clearinghouse.

“There are worrisome signs that the demand for high-skilled talent is increasing more rapidly than we’re actually educating people,” said Jamie P. Merisotis, the chief executive of the Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis group that focuses on higher education, which is releasing a report on Thursday analyzing the federal data. “We can’t expect our citizens to meet the demands of the 21st-century economy and society without a 21st-century education.”

The recent jump in college graduation mirrors similar increases in educational attainment during previous severe downturns, economists said.

“It was sort of one of these ironic good things about the Great Depression, that it got all these kids to graduate from high school, which turned out to be really good for workers later on,” said Claudia Goldin, an economics professor at Harvard.

The G.I. Bill then created a second surge in educational investment after World War II, which also helped fuel the postwar economic boom. Of course, in those cases, Professor Goldin said, education was free or very cheap; college today is not.

Cost may be one reason that college completion has not risen nearly as much for low-income students, many of whom take on large amounts of debt and often do not graduate. The share of 24-year-olds from low-income families who hold college degrees has remained relatively flat over the last several decades, according to Tom Mortenson, a higher education policy analyst with Postsecondary Education Opportunity, a newsletter.

Low-income students are less likely to graduate from high school than more affluent students, less likely to enroll in college after high school and less likely to graduate from

college after enrolling. Only about 1 out of 10 Americans whose parents were in the lowest income quartile held four-year college degrees by age 24 in 2011; the comparable share for people from the highest quartile was about 7 in 10, according to Mortenson.

Some of the recent increase in college completion has come among students who enroll in college, or return to it, at older ages, and experts say any future increases will probably need to come among this group as well, given its growth potential.

For-profit colleges — despite being more expensive and having lower completion rates than other colleges — are taking in many of these older and lower-income students. Professor Goldin estimates that for-profit colleges account for about one-fifth of the increase in bachelor's degrees over the last decade.

"Community colleges just don't have the money to expand," she said. "At the for-profits, every person who comes there they're making money on, so boy, are they expanding."

The increase in college degrees is likely to fuel a debate about the wisdom of having so many people flock to college, given high debt levels and stories of unemployed graduates who are stuck on their parents' couches.

Many economists point out that college graduates have fared much better than their less-educated peers and argue that rising educational levels will help the economy in the long run. Since the recession began in December 2007, the number of Americans with bachelor's degrees who have jobs has risen by 9 percent, while employment has fallen for everyone else.

The unemployment rate for graduates of four-year colleges between the ages of 25 and 34 was 3.3 percent in March, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For high school graduates in the same age group who had not attended college,

it was 11.8 percent.

Today’s premium for college degrees is caused partly by increasing selectiveness among employers about whom they hire and screening based on education even for positions that do not require higher skills. But jobs themselves have changed, too.

“Think about jobs 15 years ago that didn’t need any college education,” said Sandy Baum, a senior fellow at the George Washington University Graduate School of Education. Many of them now do, she added.

“Maybe you don’t need a bachelor’s to change bedpans,” Baum said, “but today if you’re an auto mechanic, you really have to understand computers and other technical things.”

Aramark takes over concessions at Spooner

After a winter without a concessionaire, Spooner Lake has someone offering a few toys to play with.

Nevada Division of State Parks awarded the contract to Aramark, the same group that operates the two paddle-wheelers at Lake Tahoe and Zephyr Cove Resort.

Aramark started renting bikes, the cabin, and opened a food and beverage station with a small amenities outlet at the first of the month.

Max Jones had operated the concession for 27 years.

Spooner Summit bike rentals are located on the east shore of

Lake Tahoe at Spooner Lake and service a major trailhead for the Flume Trail and the Tahoe Rim Trail.

Casinos frowning on Google Glass

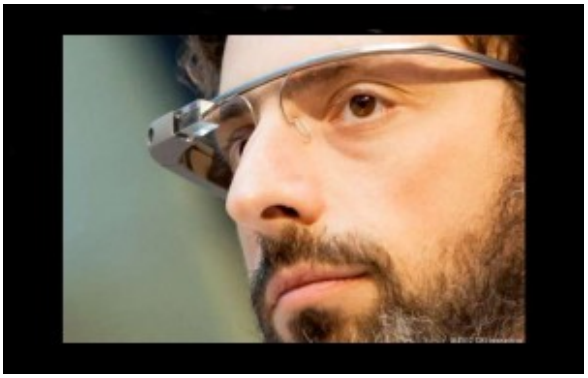
By Dara Kerr, CNET

It’s looking like gamblers aren’t going to be able to use Google Glass to enhance their poker face.

Even though the high-tech eyewear has not yet been released to the general public, casinos across the U.S. are banning Google Glass, according to the *Associated Press*.

Taking photos or videos is strictly prohibited in most all casinos, so it makes sense that a gadget touted as being able to record a video with a slight head movement or snap a photo with the wink of an eye wouldn’t be allowed.

According to the *Associated Press*, casinos in New Jersey, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Connecticut, and other states have banned Google Glass because they say it could help players cheat at card games.



Google co-founder Sergey Brin wearing Google Glass. Photo/James Martin/CNET

“If these eyeglasses were worn during a poker game, they could be used to broadcast a patron’s hand to a confederate or otherwise be used in a collusive manner,” the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement director David Rebuck wrote in a memo to the state’s casinos, according to the *Associated Press*.

“Even if the glasses had not been used for cheating… their presence at a gaming table would lead to the perception that something untoward could be occurring, thereby undermining public confidence in the integrity of gaming,” he continued.

Casinos aren’t the only places banning Google’s augmented reality eyeglasses. West Virginia lawmakers are working on a bill that would prohibit drivers from wearing Google Glass while on the road and even a bar in Seattle has announced that it’s a Glass-free zone.

Charitable bike ride to roll

through South Tahoe

The longest annual charity bicycle ride in the world, the Livestrong Texas 4000 team, will be rolling through South Lake Tahoe on June 19.

This is 19 days after departing from Austin, Texas. Anchorage is the final destination of the 70-day journey.

Sixty-nine undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Texas at Austin are pedaling in support of the fight against cancer. Along their journey, riders will volunteer at community events that contribute in the fight against cancer and visit with cancer survivors, patients, caregivers, and family members to make educational presentations about cancer prevention and early detection. They also use this time to offer hope, encouragement and share their personal stories to cancer fighters of all ages and to those who have been affected by the disease.

This is the 10th year of the ride.

To learn more about the Livestrong Texas 4000 team, to make a donation or read the riders' blogs, go online.

Eldorado to implement fire restrictions

Fire restrictions in the western half of Eldorado National Forest begin June 17.

Campfires and charcoal barbecues will be restricted to designated recreation sites and other fire related activities

will be prohibited until the end of fire season. Forest conditions are expected to continue drying and the entire Eldorado National Forest may be under fire restrictions by July 1.

A map showing the fire restriction zones, and a list of exempted areas are online.

Study: Hands-free doesn't equate to risk-free

By Larry Copeland, USA Today

The increasingly popular voice-activated, in-car technologies that allow drivers to text, talk on the phone or even use Facebook while driving still allow for dangerous mental distraction, according to a study.

In the most comprehensive study of its kind to look at drivers' mental distraction, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that as mental workload and distractions increase, reaction time slows, brain function is compromised, and drivers scan the road less and miss visual clues, researchers say. This could potentially result in drivers being unable to see items right in front of them, such as stop signs or pedestrians.

The study sought to measure the impact of cognitive or mental distraction on driving. The other two types of driver distraction, visual and manual, which involve the eyes and the hands doing something like looking at a cellphone while

sending a text have been studied much more extensively.

“There’s a sort of arms race (among auto manufacturers) over what’s going into the car these days,” said David Strayer, a University of Utah cognitive distraction expert who co-authored the new report. “Any function that can be put in the car is being put in the car without a full examination of whether it should go in the car.”

The foundation’s research, which involved 150 drivers, follows a smaller study by the Texas Transportation Institute released in April, which found that texting while driving using a voice-to-text application was just as dangerous as texting manually.

Drivers in the AAA Foundation study were analyzed while engaging in eight different distracting activities as they “drove” on a sophisticated driving simulator and in an instrumented vehicle on residential streets in Salt Lake City.

Researchers measured brain waves, eye movement and other metrics to assess what happens as drivers listened to an audio book, talked on the phone or responded to voice-activated emails while driving. They found that, as drivers’ mental workload increased, their reaction time slowed, their field of vision narrowed and they missed visual cues.

“This is a reminder to the general public that distracted driving is real,” said Peter Kissinger, president and CEO of AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. “Three out of four drivers believe that hands-free is better than handheld. But hands-free is not risk-free, and we now have new evidence that clearly demonstrates that.”

Kissinger said the foundation “is calling upon auto manufacturers and the electronics industry to work with us so we can learn as much as possible. Before any more wholesale installation of new technology, let’s step back and measure how the technology affects mental distraction.”

The group is also urging the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to broaden its driver distraction guidelines to include the kind of mental distraction associated with voice-activated calling.

In March, ABI Research, a market intelligence company specializing in global technology markets, projected that infotainment systems in new vehicles would jump from 9 million in 2013 to 62 million in 2018.

California budget overhauls school funding

By Sharon Noguchi and Mike Rosenberg, San Jose Mercury News

Seven months after his tax initiative refueled funding for California's beleaguered public schools, Gov. Jerry Brown has orchestrated what's being billed as a major overhaul of how the state funds K-12 education.

The deal, scheduled for a vote Friday as part of the state's 2013-14 budget plan, gives districts more control over their own spending and props up schools that teach the most disadvantaged kids.

The new formula will untangle four decades of growing mandates that created more than 60 pots of money for programs like school lunches and libraries. After years of state deficits focused the school funding debate on budget cuts, the proceeds from Brown's Proposition 30 and rebounding economy positioned the state to change the conversation.

Starting this fall, most of California's roughly 1,000 school

districts will receive a larger base grant to spend as they see fit – supplemented by money for hard-to-educate students. Districts where more than 55 percent of students are poor, English learners or foster kids will receive even more money.

“It’s a huge change,” said David Plank, a Stanford education professor. “The system is clear, transparent and efficient in a way it has not been in the past.”

“I’m elated,” said Michael Kirst, president of the State Board of Education and a key Brown adviser who helped draft the blueprint for the governor’s Local Control Funding Formula.

However, critics say the change falls short.

With funding growing slowly, schools won’t be able to immediately restore the librarians, counselors, music and arts programs cut over the years. Even by 2020-21, the year the full funding formula kicks in, California will not be up to the national average in education funding.

Still, Brown has received much credit for engineering the change in school funding.

“A change in the formula that will strengthen local school districts, help poor kids and kids that have serious language barriers – this is a real step forward,” Brown said Tuesday at a news conference with legislative leaders at the state Capitol. He noted that, along with health care, one of his top two priorities during budget talks was “improving educational opportunity.”

Not only will Brown’s plan allow schools more latitude in how they use state money, it will hold them accountable for results.

How and what schools will have to prove – maybe minimum test scores, narrowing the achievement gap or reducing dropouts – will be set by the State Board of Education beginning next

month.

“I think that’s going to be a very lively conversation over the next year,” said Plank, who directs the Policy Analysis for Education group.

How that plays out worries some. “We need to make sure that the accountability is clear and transparent,” said Patty Scripter of the California State PTA. The public, she said, should be able to keep track of how schools spend money and what they achieve.

The plan’s increases will be modest.

“It doesn’t resolve at all the grossly inadequate under-funding of our public schools,” said John Affeldt, lead attorney with Public Advocates, a party to one of two lawsuits filed against the state over the adequacy of education funding. That suit is in the state appellate court.

And other remnants of California’s old funding system won’t change. Most glaring is the dual level of funding: Tax-rich districts like Palo Alto, Mountain View-Los

Altos High, San Mateo Union High and others will retain the property taxes that help boost their schools funding beyond the level that the state would otherwise fund.

Under the new plan, revenue will grow more quickly in districts with high poverty levels, like Oakland Unified, West Contra Costa in Richmond and East Side Union High in San Jose, than in districts with fewer poor children and language learners.

But that is by design: Brown was insistent that schools get more resources to educate more challenging students.

The goal is to improve student performance. But some challenge the significance of the funding change.

Student achievement lags not because of the complicated funding formula but because of overall education spending, said Ron Bennett, executive director of School Services of California, which advises school districts.

“If we will remain last in the nation in per-student funding, it won’t matter that we have this new distribution mechanism,” he said.

Legislators had initially challenged Brown’s goal to give more funding to poor students. But they came around when Brown granted some legislators’ priorities. Assembly Speaker John Perez won phased-in university scholarships for middle-class students while Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg secured money for mental health programs and dental services for the poor.

“The governor has insisted on fiscal balance and a fundamental reform of how we finance public schools,” Steinberg said. “Those objectives are in this budget, and we’re very proud to join him.”

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, senior fellow at the USC Price School of Public Policy, called it “refreshing, how (California leaders) actually sat down and came to some kind of compromise. But of course it’s easier now” with the surplus.

The Legislature created the old system in 1972, after the state Supreme Court in Serrano vs. Priest ruled school funding unconstitutional. So the state tried to equalize base funding – which in those days varied with each district’s property tax rate – and provide money for special needs.

“Over time, the old system became very unwieldy because of these 70-some categorical” programs, some of which came and went, Bennett said.

After Proposition 13 limited property tax increases, the state stepped in again to rescue school funding.

In that landmark change in school funding, the governor at the time was none other than Jerry Brown.

French winery puts the good stuff in a can

By S. Irene Virbila, Los Angeles Times

Making its debut at the prestigious Vinexpo beginning Sunday in Bordeaux: French wine in a can!

Will Winestar's single-serving cans create a riot in the hallowed halls of the international wine and spirits fair? Maybe not.

The Paris-based company isn't dealing in the generic swill those adorable single-serving bottles typically hold. Their wines are all A.O.C. (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée). Each 187-milliliter can (one-fourth the size of a typical 750-milliliter bottle) lists the wine estate, the appellation and the grape varietals as well as the vintage. Working with the European office of Ball Packaging, Winestar founder Cédric Segal developed a can with a coating inside "to make total isolation between the wine and the can."



Wine now comes in a can.
Photo/Winestar

The first series hails from Château de L'Ille from the Corbières appellation in the Languedoc region of southern France. The white is a blend of the local Rolle (Vermentino) grape, vintage 2011. The rosé is Syrah and Grenache, vintage 2012. And the red is a blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache from the 2011 vintage. The cans sell for about $3.30 to $4.

Segal says he got the idea when he was traveling in Asia and saw that Australia was selling quality wine there in cans. Why couldn't that work just as well with French wines?

He realizes that the French have a very strong tradition with the bottle and doesn't expect the can to be adopted immediately in France. "Most export markets, though, have already accepted the screw cap and synthetic cork, so it's not such a big leap," Segal said.

Winestar cans are essentially aimed for the at-home market when you want a little wine with dinner but don't want to open a whole bottle. "You can use it for picnics, or on the train or on your boat."

He cautions that it's not cheap wine and should ideally be drunk from a wine glass. So don't expect to see hipsters sitting at the edge of Canal Saint-Martin in Paris knocking back rosé straight from the can.

Right now, the firm's tinned wines are sold in wine shops and in supermarket snack sections. Segal is in talks with airlines, small supermarkets at train stations and also the French train company about carrying the wines.

Since Winestar only launched last week, it's early yet. By the end of the year, the company will release wines in cans from Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Rhone Valley. Segal also plans to introduce a premium line of wines in cans called Crus Etoiles

at a higher price point. The first one will be a Sauternes. Sauternes? Now that’s radical.

“The idea is to give the consumer the wines that they really want to drink at any time whether it’s red, white or rosé, whether full-bodied or light,” Segal said. “What Nespresso did for the coffee market with single servings of high-quality coffee, we want to achieve for the wine market.”

Think we’ll be seeing folks pick up a six-pack of Bordeaux for the Hollywood Bowl any time soon? Depends on how it goes at Vinexpo next week.