Scam artists targeting South Lake Tahoe seniors

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department is warning people of a scam to access retiree's financial information.

A person falsely presents himself as a representative from the local gas company and offers to set up an appointment to review the customer's financial records. The representative claims they can lower the gas bill if they can review the financial documents.

The public should know Southwest Gas will never send anyone out to review personal financial information. Anyone receiving a phone call of this nature should not give any information. They should contact the police department.

If someone arrives at your residence asking for personal information, call the police immediately at (530) 542.6100.

Teacher expectations impact how students learn

By Alix Spiegel, NPR

In a recent "Morning Edition" story, I look at expectations — specifically, how teacher expectations can affect the performance of the children they teach.

The first psychologist to systematically study this was a Harvard professor named Robert Rosenthal, who in 1964, did a wonderful experiment at an elementary school south of San

Francisco.

The idea was to figure out what would happen if teachers were told that certain kids in their class were destined to succeed, and so Rosenthal took a normal I.Q. test and dressed it up as a different test.

“It was a standardized I.Q. Test,” he says, “Flanagan’s Test of General Ability, but the cover we put on it, we had printed on every test booklet, said ‘Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition.'”

Rosenthal told the teachers that this very special test from Harvard had the very special ability to predict which kids were about to be very special – that is, which kids were about to experience a dramatic growth in their I.Q.

After the kids took the test, he then chose from every class several children totally at random. There was nothing at all to distinguish these kids from the other kids, but he told their teachers that the test predicted the kids were on the verge of an intense intellectual bloom.

As he followed the children over the next two years, Rosenthal discovered that the teachers’ expectations of these kids really did affect the students. “If teachers had been led to expect greater gains in I.Q., then increasingly, those kids gained more I.Q.,” he says.

But just how do expectations influence I.Q.?

As Rosenthal did more research, he found that expectations effect teachers’ moment-to-moment interactions with the children they teach in a thousand almost invisible ways. Teachers give the students that they expect to succeed more time to answer questions, more specific feedback, and more approval: They consistently touch, nod and smile at those kids more.

Read the whole story

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2 Halloween events for youth in South Lake Tahoe

South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce is involved in two Halloween events.

Treat Street returns to the Pine Cone Acre Motel, 735 Emerald Bay Road, in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 31.

The 5-8pm is free and open to the public. It is designed to give kids a safe place to get candy.

For more information, call Danny Freemon at (530) 541.0375.

The other event – also on Oct. 31 – is the Halloween Cove at Timber Cove Lodge, 3411 Lake Tahoe Blvd. in South Tahoe.

The event is from 4-8pm and is open to the public.

Nevada seat belt use tops 90%

According to a study, seat belt use in Nevada is at 90.5 percent rate.

The Day Time Seat Belt Use Observational Survey is conducted annually to determine Nevada's statewide seat belt use and other related demographics. This year's survey was May 21-June 3.

The 2011 seat belt use in Nevada was measured at 94.1 percent. The difference in rate may be attributable to the different survey methodologies used in 2011 compared to 2012, where the methodology was changed to meet new federal requirements. Specifically, the selection of survey counties changed from a population-based to a fatality-based criterion.

High-visibility enforcement such as the Click It or Ticket mobilization has contributed to increasing the national belt usage rate from 58 percent in 1994 to an observed usage rate of 84 percent in 2011, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Similarly, Nevada's seat belt usage has increased from 74 percent in 2002 to the current 90 percent since it implemented its statewide Click it or Ticket campaign.

Last year 62 people in Nevada died in motor vehicle crashes where occupants were not buckled up.

Tahoe Valley students to benefit from people ordering pizza

Bob Dog Pizza in Meyers is hosting a fundraiser for Tahoe Valley Elementary School.

Twenty percent of all proceeds on Sept. 20 from 11am-9pm will go to the school. This includes dine-in, pick up, and

delivery. Just mention Tahoe Valley at the time of order.

Bob Dog is at 3141 Highway 50, Ste. C2, Meyers. The number is (530) 577.2364.

Union political money at stake with Prop. 32

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Labor unions argue that a campaign-finance measure on California's November ballot would unfairly hobble their political pull, but behind that lies a tacit admission: If given an easy choice, many of their members would keep the dues money that helps power union clout.



By banning payroll-deducted money from California politics, Proposition 32 would undoubtedly boost the number of political "free riders" in employee unions.

Although labor leaders universally oppose the measure, some union members support it as a way to make their representatives more responsive. Some, pressed by wage and benefit cuts, wonder what they're getting for their money. And some just want to hang on to a little more cash.

"Certainly getting the money back would be a help," said Tobin Brinker, a furloughed teacher and former San Bernardino city councilman who works at Frisbie Middle School in Rialto. "But this is also about representation. I'm a conservative, and I

wish our union represented conservatives better."

Proposition 32 expressly forbids "unions and corporations" from making direct contributions to state and local candidates or causes, although they could still fund independent political campaigns and contribute to candidates for federal office.

Especially loathsome to labor is the proposed ban on using payroll-deducted money to fund political efforts. Any money collected via that method would have to go to such activities as communicating with members, bargaining and other job-related representation.

Business interests are less likely to notice the impact of that provision because they receive most of their political funds through executive contributions or by tapping company treasuries. But the set-it-and-forget-it payroll collection method has been a union fundraising staple for decades.

Unions aren't required to publicly disclose their collections or budgets, but public payroll figures provide a window into the hundreds of millions of dollars at stake in the Proposition 32 battle.

State payroll data show that 75 percent of unionized state workers paid full dues in December 2011, the latest monthly information available. All but a handful of the rest opted to pay "fair share" fees that fund the nonpolitical benefits of union representation, such as contract negotiations. The figures don't include California's university system employees.

Between dues and fees in December, unions representing roughly 170,000 state workers received $10.5 million for the month. Annually, that could amount to $126 million. About half went to the state's largest labor group, Service Employees International Union Local 1000.

It’s not clear how much of that money was earmarked for politics, but if voters pass Proposition 32, all of it would be out of bounds for political activities.

Labor groups would have to find new ways to raise political cash — or perhaps return to old methods.

Early in the organized labor movement, unions used shop stewards as “walking delegates” who collected dues, sometimes by coaxing and occasionally by confronting members.

“They walked right up to you, every pay period,” said Bob Bruno, who studies labor relations at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “It was incredibly time-consuming and expensive for the unions. Sometimes you’d have fights.”

Manufacturing unions started collecting dues through voluntary payroll deductions in the 1940s, which cut costs and curbed the face-to-face squabbles that damaged solidarity.

“If you had to hand the money over, it seemed like a loss,” Bruno said. “But if it came out of a paycheck, you didn’t feel it.”

Automating collections also curbed the number of free riders, workers who didn’t pay dues but received the benefits of union coverage, Bruno said. Union revenues stabilized and helped fuel the growth of organized labor for 30 years.

Beyond making political collections a hassle, public- and private-sector labor leaders contend that Proposition 32 is the tip of a political ax hacking away at the political influence of the middle class.

“It’s an attack on unions and working people,” said Teamsters Joint Council 42 President Randy Cammack in an interview with the *Bee* last month.

Some state workers, however, say a change might make unions

more accountable.

Ken Hamidi, a state employee and vocal critic of his union, SEIU Local 1000, argues that payroll deductions for political activities distance labor leaders from the rank and file. Ending the practice, he said, would close the gap.

“It would keep the unions more honest and responsive, at least,” said Hamidi, who for five years has led a dissident group seeking to split from Local 1000. “They couldn’t take the money for granted.”

Local 1000 leaders declined to comment.

Only full dues-paying members can vote on contracts and officers, so fair-share fee payers can’t fully engage in their union’s internal politics.

That’s coercive, said Ernest Feliciano, a tax auditor who has worked for the state for more than 20 years: “It’s like forcing someone to belong to Costco.”

Still, 94 percent of California workers covered by a union contract identify themselves as full members. The 2011 federal data sifted by researchers Barry Hirsch of Georgia State University and Trinity University’s David Macpherson on their website unionstats.com show the percentage was essentially the same for public- and private-sector employees.

With so much money at stake, unions have made defeating Proposition 32 a priority. They’ve poured nearly $36.5 million into campaign efforts to defeat the measure, with more expected in the run-up to the Nov. 6 vote.

Nearly half the money, $16.3 million, has come from the California Teachers Association. SEIU has put up another $6.1 million.

The measure’s supporters have raised about $8 million, half of it from a single donation last week by an organization with

ties to billionaire conservative activists Charles and David Koch.

Pepperdine political scientist Michael Shires said he expects the Yes on 32 campaign will continue to pick up speed between now and November, but he stopped short of predicting the outcome.

“I think,” Shires said, “this thing is going to be close all the way to the end.”

5% hike at CSU likely if Prop. 30 fails

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

After hearing dire budget scenarios of devastating cuts to faculty, students and classes, California State University trustees Tuesday tentatively approved a plan to raise tuition 5 percent next year if voters reject a tax measure on the November ballot.

The board’s finance committee acted on a series of contingency measures during a meeting in Long Beach to deal with what Chancellor Charles B. Reed called “the biggest challenge CSU has ever had to face.”

Failure of Proposition 30, backed by the governor, would trigger a $250-million funding cut to the Cal State system. The 5 percent tuition hike — equal to $150 per semester — would raise an estimated $58 million in revenue in fiscal 2012-13, officials said.

Annual undergraduate tuition at the system's 23 campuses would rise to $6,270, not including school-based fees, books and other costs.

Officials are also proposing to increase per-unit costs for non-resident students 7 percent, to $399 from $372.

If Proposition 30 passes, Cal State would forego the January hike and also rescind the 9 percent tuition hike that took effect this fall and was expected to raise $132 million in revenue. The system would have to refund tuition checks, grant tuition credit and recalculate financial aid packages for most of its 412,000 students.

The finance panel approved the measures by a vote of 6 to 1, with student trustee Jillian Ruddell opposed. The full board of trustees is expected to approve the plan Wednesday.

The University of California regents last week held a brainstorming session to determine how that system would deal with a potential $375-million funding cut if the tax hike measure fails. The regents also said a midyear tuition increase, possibly as much as 20 percent, or about $2,400, could be possible.

At the Cal State meeting, several speakers, including Lillian Taiz, president of the California Faculty Assn., spoke against the revenue-raising measures, arguing that other options to save costs and increase funds had not been exhausted.

Several students spoke against the fee hike, noting that it was particularly distressing as incoming campus presidents receive such perquisites as salary hikes, car allowances and in many cases state-funded housing.

"We've had ongoing tuition hikes year after year," said Cal State San Bernardino anthropology major Miguel Garcia, 26, before addressing the board. "Why do they keep giving executives pay increases if they don't have any money?"

Despite the uncertainty of Proposition 30's outcome, the chancellor argued for action now.

"We're operating on the edge," Reed told trustees. "The contingencies need to be voted on now and not kicked down the road. We need to give students, parents and the public adequate notice."

Several trustees said they voted for the plan with reluctance.

"There's no question we will do whatever it takes to roll back tuition," Roberta Achtenberg said. "We never wanted to raise it in the first place because we knew it would be a burden on families. But we had no choice…. We should be doing everything possible to pass Prop. 30, but it's important to make everybody understand that if it doesn't pass there will be terrible consequences."

Reed highlighted some of those consequences: about 20,000 qualified students turned away, 5,500 class sections slashed, and 1,500 faculty and staff reductions.

Cal State campuses are preparing to send out letters to prospective students warning them that they may not have spots if the tax measure fails. Critics, who oppose raising taxes, also said the system should not be using public funds for such political purposes.

Proposition 30 would raise billions of dollars for the state budget by temporarily increasing sales levies, and income taxes on high earners.

Several college leaders previewed ongoing and potential campus effects if that measure fails. Cal Poly Pomona President J. Michael Ortiz said the school is using obsolete equipment in a number of academic fields because it can't afford cutting-edge technology.

John D. Welty, president of Cal State Fresno, said his campus

may be forced to cut the number of majors offered at the school as well as courses offered in some majors. The campus has built up $130 million in deferred maintenance.

“I’m awake at night worrying about whether we’re going to be able to keep the infrastructure in place,” Welty said.

Reed had also proposed a controversial series of fee hikes even if Proposition 30 passes that were designed to increase revenue but also to change student behavior. The trustees’ finance committee shelved those ideas until its November meeting, which falls after the election.

Among those ideas, which would bring in about $35 million, were:

• A per-unit supplement of $372 for seniors who have already accumulated 150 semester units.

• A $100 per-unit fee for students who want to repeat a class. Officials estimate that each term, about 40,000 seats in classes are occupied by students who have already taken the course.

• A $200 per-unit fee for any course load of 17 units or more, which is intended to discourage students from enrolling in a number of classes and then dropping some later.

S. Tahoe council slow to make substantive decisions

By Kathryn Reed

For a City Council that claims it wants change, it is slow to

take action to back up all that talk.



Hours and hours of chatter is what Tuesday was all about. South Lake Tahoe Mayor Claire Fortier started the proceedings with a lengthy speech about the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan update. (No one from the TRPA was in the audience.)

Then the conversation turned to prioritization of area plans. The council, after hours of discussion, couldn't pick a plan to study.

This was followed by what turned into a heated debate about the loop road, where at one time Councilwoman Angela Swanson accused some of her colleagues of being "nimbyistic and racist" for wanting to alter the alignment into a poorer area of town.

Then after the vote was taken to "strongly recommend" the Tahoe Transportation District board take the alternative that has been proposed off the table, Councilman Hal Cole caved. Then he waffled on the cave.

Well past the lunch hour and not breaking, the council then jumped into discussing the Harrison Avenue project. They seemed surprised to learn property owners expected the city to front their portion, which would be paid back over 20 years with interest. But *Lake Tahoe News* knew this. The council still has to decide if it wants to be a bank of sorts for this project.

As for the area plans – those are what planning documents are expected to be called in the Regional Plan update. (That document could be before the TRPA Governing Board in November.) It remains to be seen how the council will proceed. With the city's staff being gutted, only one plan can be done at a time unless an outside consultant is hired. The two areas of town being considered are the Y and Stateline.

The Tahoe Valley Community Plan – community plans are the old way of doing business – was never finished. It's been sitting around since 2003. City staff thinks an environmental impact report can be done for $150,000, but those with more experience in these matters tell *Lake Tahoe News* that figure is laughably low.

The Stateline plan does not need the enviro docs, so it would definitely be cheaper to complete and faster. Plus, it would dovetail into the other planning going on in that section of town.

In the end, the council asked staff to come back with the cost and timeline to do both simultaneously.

The vote regarding the loop road had Councilmen Cole, Tom Davis and Bruce Grego winning – meaning a letter will be written to the TTD board telling them to no longer study the alternative they first proposed. Of course the TTD board can completely disregard the letter and do what it wants. Fortier dissented. Swanson abstained – saying she didn't want her personal vote to be misconstrued when she went to the TTD board and voted the voice of the council and not of herself.

The TTD board at its Sept. 14 meeting said it was starting fresh, but that the alternative on the table will stay on the table – just not as the preferred alternative.

Then Cole wanted to reconsider his vote. Then he decided he didn't want to. He has 48 hours from the time of the vote to make up his mind.

As for Harrison Avenue, the project is moving forward. For the residents who are miffed about the one-way streets that are in the plans, they will get to voice their concerns at a special meeting in October that has yet to be finalized.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is rehabbing the five cubs in this photo. The South Shore animal facility has three webcams for the bears that may be accessed via the website and then hitting the webcam icon at the top right of the page.

• A State of the South Shore Economy Forum is being put on Oct. 29 from 6-8pm at Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe. (Cocktails from 5-6pm.) This is partnership with Tahoe Prosperity Center, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

• The Placer County Board of Supervisors is expected to adopt the 2012-13 budget Sept. 25. The county's proposed $730.2 million final budget is $19 million or 2.5 percent less than the final 2011-12 budget.

• Burger Lounge on Emerald Bay Road is closing Sept. 30 because the property owners did not want to renew the lease.

• Tahoe City is having a vision workshop Sept. 27 from 6-8pm at Granlibakken. Click on the flyer for more details.

What is the most pressing issue this election season — at any level?