

With Sandoval opting against Senate run, how will GOP's power structure change?



Gov. Brian Sandoval does not want Sen. Harry Reid's job.
Photo/LTN file

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

When Gov. Brian Sandoval revealed recently he would forgo a run for Senate, the announcement ended a year of speculation about his political future but triggered a new round of conjecture.

The subject this time around: What's next for the Nevada GOP's power structure?

U.S. Rep Joe Heck and state Sen. Michael Roberson are now the GOP front-runners looking to make high-profile ladder climbs this election season. The two are still publicly quiet about their plans, but Nevada political observers are abuzz about the futures of the two Southern Nevada lawmakers.

As for Sandoval, saying no to the Senate may open other doors. So what are the potential paths for the state's top Republicans?

Read the whole story

Calif. AG challenges ruling against tiered water rates

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

The California Attorney General's Office has asked the state Supreme Court to depublish a controversial ruling that it argues will impede the state's ability to encourage conservation by charging people higher rates when they use excessive amounts of water.

In a seven-page letter filed late last week, the AG, arguing for the State Water Resources Control Board, said an April decision by the 4th District Court of Appeal contains "unnecessary and overbroad language" that could hamper the state's efforts to fight water waste amid the ongoing drought.

In a lawsuit challenging a tiered water-rate structure once used in the city of San Juan Capistrano, the appellate court found that the system was unconstitutional because it charged more for water than it cost the city to provide the service.

At least two-thirds of California water agencies use some type of tiered-rate structure, which officials say has been an effective tool for encouraging customers to use less water. The remaining agencies use a flat-rate structure based on the units of water consumed.

Read the whole story

Paisley's guitar prowess takes center stage



Brad Paisley delights the crowd at Harveys on June 11.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE — Brad Paisley was crushin' it at Harveys on Thursday night.

The three-time Grammy winner had the crowd at the outdoor arena on its feet for most of the 1 hour, 40 minute-concert.

Besides being a singer and song writer, Paisley is a phenomenal guitarist. He and Keith Urban are the premier guitarists in the world of country; and both could hold their own against colleagues in any genre.

His fingers rarely stopped moving across the strings all night. He didn't interact with the crowd much; instead letting his fingers do much of the talking. Segues from one song to the next were him playing a riff.

The night started with "River Bank" off his 2014 album "Moonshine in the Trunk". It was the start of an evening of guitar-dominating dynamics. While it's one thing to hear his songs recorded, the live version is so much richer. His picking is sensational and is what makes his live performance worth seeing.



Brad Paisley is a renowned guitarist who uses a variety of the instruments throughout his performance.

Paisley switches guitars – sometimes mid-song – as often as Cher does wardrobe changes. He is the owner of two less guitars after the June 11 concert, though. This is something he is accustomed to. Early on he singled out a little girl in a pink cowboy hat. He autographed it and then later called her

up to the side of the stage, handed her his guitar, shook her hand and got a “thank you” from her. Later in the show 7-year-old Cayden was brought to the stage to play Mario Kart 8, which was then projected on the screen that was much larger than the normal movie screen. Paisley and his six-member band rocked out while this took place. The youngster, who set a new top score, walked away with a guitar practically as tall as he is.

It was the diversity of songs that brought the fans out – not his goodwill.

Paisley blends old-style country with quirky tunes like “Celebrity” (about selfies and other narcissistic behavior) and “I’m Gonna Miss Her” (where fishing is his priority and not his woman).



A youngster in the crowd goes home with a Brad Paisley guitar.

It wasn't until he slowed things down with "She's Everything" that the crowd sat down. The ballad showed his sentimental side.

He saved the love song "Then" off the 2009 "American Saturday Night" album for his first of two encores.



Brad Paisley and Justin Moore use a fan's phone to take a selfie.

Mickey Guyton and Justin Moore, the two opening acts, each sang a duet with Paisley. It won't be surprising if one day each is a headliner on this stage.

The only disappointment was how few people were in attendance at the 7,500-seat venue. Considering Paisley sold-out the 17,000-plus seat Hollywood Bowl and filled the 20,000-seat Sleep Train Amphitheater in San Diego earlier this month, it's not about his popularity. Maybe it was the fact the Warriors were playing or that Paisley has now been here three of the last four years.

Future concerts at Harveys:

July 3 – Aerosmith

July 18 – Imagine Dragons

July 21 – Train, opening are The Fray/Matt Nathanson

July 22 – Kenny Chesney, opening Chase Rice

Aug. 7 – Jackson Browne

Aug. 8 – Elton John

Aug. 13 – Slightly Stoopid, opening are Dirty Heads/Stick Figure

Aug. 23 – Dierks Bentley, opening are Kip Moore/Maddie & Tae/Canaan Smith

Sept. 5 – Sammy Hagar and the Circle, featuring Michael Anthony, Jason Bonham and Vic Johnson

Sept. 9 – Dave Matthews Band.

New rules may stimulate Nev. medical marijuana market

By Conor Shine, Las Vegas Sun

It's been two years since the Legislature approved a new law establishing a system of dispensaries and growing facilities to make medical marijuana more accessible to patients, but so

far not a single bud has been sold.

That could change in the coming weeks with the planned opening of the Euphoria Wellness dispensary in Las Vegas, but there's no denying there have been growing pains as the industry struggles to launch.

Many of the issues stem from unintended consequences arising from the way the 2013 law was written, and Sen. Tick Segerblom, a leading marijuana advocate, made it a priority during the recently ended legislative session to fix as many problems as possible.

"When you grow (an industry) from scratch, there's all kinds of issues you never thought about," Segerblom said. "Basically all these things we're dealing with are things we've learned over the last two years."

Read the whole story

Ducks, geese, rice – the next drought victims?

By Josephy Serna, Los Angeles Times

The nests of hundreds of thousands of birds and the food for millions more could be imperiled this year because of fewer rice crops in California – the latest symptom of the state's historic drought.

Only about 375,000 acres of rice are expected to be planted this year, a 30% decrease from a typical year and the lowest in California since 1991, according to a statement from the California Rice Commission.

In summer, the rice is used as nesting for native mallards and shore birds, said Mark Biddlecomb, director for the western region of Ducks Unlimited, a wetlands conservation group.

Read the whole story

Early years of S. Lake Tahoe come to life



Laurel Ames, Betty Mitchell and John Cefalu talk June 10 about the early days of South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Nuggets of South Lake Tahoe's 50-year history were uncovered Wednesday night as three longtime locals bantered about days gone by.

Laurel Ames, Betty Mitchell and John Cefalu spoke about the early days of the city and how some things are better, and some not so much. They weren't the only ones who remembered what it was like. About a dozen people in the audience raised their hands when asked who was around when the incorporation took place.

Ames and Mitchell were two of the powerhouses behind the two-year process that led to the eventual incorporation of the city in November 1965. They said it was a group effort to pull it off – with many of the 14,000 people living here at the time volunteering to do whatever was needed.



These were the days before computers, the ability to mail merge, and adhesive stamps. Addressing parties were necessary to get information to people. It meant addressing envelopes by hand, licking stamps, licking envelopes. At that time so many people were not registered to vote because they feared getting called for jury duty, which would have meant driving to the courthouse in Placerville.

One of the first issues to be dealt with was what area should the city occupy. There was no money for a survey, so the South Tahoe Public Utility District boundaries were used. The only time this was expanded was when the city took over the operation of Lake Tahoe Airport from El Dorado County.

“Heavenly Valley was pure politics. (Owner Hugh) Killebrew came to us and said, ‘If you keep me in the boundary, I’ll sue you’,” Ames recalled. That is why the California Base Lodge is in the county. Incorporation proponents didn’t have the means to fight a legal battle.

Cefalu remembers being at the old high school for the Caltrans meeting to discuss the agency’s proposed freeway through town.

“The fact that the freeway was to have an off-ramp into

Harrah's parking lot aggravated Harvey Gross, (owner of Harveys casino)," Cefalu said.

He said if the freeway had been built, it would have been a disaster for the community.

Folks in Placerville didn't want much to do with those in the Lake Tahoe Basin, other than to collect the tax revenue, while returning little of it.

Mitchell recalled the time she and her husband were going to put an addition on their house. They tried to get a permit, even wanted to pay for it.

"They said you don't need it; that no one would come to inspect it," Mitchell said.

This, though, led to a lot of the funkiness of the city and poor craftsmanship in some cases.

Ames misses the big trees that used to line Highway 50, adding this is one of the sadder changes.

Signs were an early bugaboo for officials. That is one ordinance that remains contentious today, primarily because of the lack of enforcement.

Harrison Avenue came about after parking was eliminated along Highway 50. Frank Globin, according to Cefalu, created a 1-foot easement on the Caltrans side so there would always be a buffer. This property came into play during the recent Harrison Avenue upgrades.

Cefalu said for years the city endured the wrath of the state transportation department because the electeds voted against the freeway and the citizenry said the same.

The good ol' boy network was established before incorporation became a reality. There was a group called the Roosters.

“Five of those folks were elected to the City Council so you can see where the influence started,” Cefalu said.

Calif. worrying about next recession

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

Even as California’s leaders prepare a new state budget that is flush with cash, Gov. Jerry Brown has increasingly raised the specter of another recession that could undo years of hard-won financial progress.

When he released his latest spending proposal last month, he said a downturn was “around the corner.” In a speech to business leaders, he said the question was “not if, when.” And he told county government officials that even a moderate downturn could cost the state \$40 billion in revenue over three years.

The governor’s warnings may seem overwrought, given that economists see no sign of trouble on the horizon. And state revenue has routinely exceeded even the most bullish projections in recent years.

But the question is whether California has done enough to guard against another budget crisis, and experts say that the answer is a resounding no.

Read the whole story

Timberlake to bring A List star power to ACC

By Kathryn Reed

"There aren't many places I can go where I don't feel like I'm being watched. But the golf course is one of them. It's my refuge. It's where I get a chance to be alone in the world."

Justin Timberlake clearly had not played the American Century Championship when he said those words to *Golf* magazine in 2012.

The music powerhouse and sometimes actor will be hitting the links at this year's celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline. It's a first for this nine-time Grammy Award winner and four-time Emmy Awards recipient to play in the 26-year-old tournament.

He might find the reception he receives more like being live on stage instead of a more staid atmosphere. The tournament, while serious in nature for some of the players, is a party for others. And it is definitely a party for those watching on the 17th from their boats and the beach. And the practice rounds are all about fans getting autographs from the celebrities and taking photos with their favorites. The popular players have a gallery following them.



Justin Timberlake will make his ACC debut this July.
Photo/Michael Albov

Golf, though, is a serious endeavor for Timberlake. The 34-year-old has been playing since he was 12. He has a 6 handicap. Timberlake was host of the PGA's 2008 Las Vegas tour stop. The tournament was renamed the Justin Timberlake Shriners Hospitals for Children Open from 2008-12.

"I think he has a chance to finish in the top 20, maybe top 15, but he has to play well," Phil Weidinger, spokesman for the ACC tournament, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Weidinger believes Timberlake could be in the hunt early if he plays up to his handicap.

Winners of this tournament, though, tend to have a zero handicap.

Timberlake is bound to put some points on the board because a modified Stableford scoring system is used. The tournament has a \$600,000 purse.

While NBC and American Century always try to have 15 to 20 percent of the field be newbies, it can be hard to get athletes and entertainers who are in their prime to play because of conflicts with their jobs. Timberlake has been invited multiple times, but until now has not been able to fit the ACC into his schedule.

The tournament is July 14-19.

Former IT director sues El Dorado County

By Kathryn Reed

An El Dorado County employee has filed a lawsuit against the county, interim chief administrative officer/human resources director, district attorney and auditor-controller.

Kelly Webb, one-time director of Information Technology for the county, in the suit alleges her First Amendment rights were violated, that she was discriminated against because of her age and gender, and that she was harassed.

Webb started working for the county full time in May 1985. She was appointed acting IT director by then CAO Terri Daly on March 15, 2011. This appointment came with a substantial pay raise. On July 23, 2013, she became permanent IT director at the direction of the Board of Supervisors.

Two days later, Auditor-Controller Joe Harn sent an email to Daly that said, "I believe that section 210.a(3) of the County Charter requires a formal recruitment for the IT director position." The appointment also violated the Brown Act because it was not on an agenda.

According to the lawsuit, Webb doesn't know why the IT directorship was revoked.

Lake Tahoe News asked Human Resources Director Pamela Knorr, District Attorney Vern Pierson and Harn to respond to the allegations in the lawsuit. Neither Knorr nor Pierson

responded. Pierson also has the role of chief technology officer.

“I have read Ms. Webb’s complaint and I can’t figure out exactly what I have allegedly done. When she was acting IT director she worked directly for the Board of Supervisors, not me, not the DA. IT director is an at-will position. If the Board of Supervisors wanted Ms. Webb to be IT director, they would make her IT director. It’s the board’s call,” Harn told *Lake Tahoe News*. “When the Board of Supervisors appointed Ms. Webb IT director in July of 2013, I did write the CAO and inform the CAO that the appointment violated the County Charter (the law). That’s just me doing my job. Ms. Webb has been an analyst for a long time in the CAO’s office. She should have known the County Charter and realized her July 2013 appointment was invalid.”

County Counsel Robyn Drivon told *Lake Tahoe News*, “The county of El Dorado has just recently received this suit and is in the process of assigning it to counsel for review and response.

“The facts are:

- Ms. Webb has worked for the county of El Dorado for many years.
- She served for three years as the Interim Information & Technology Director.
- Ms. Webb did not meet the minimum educational qualifications for the permanent IT director and therefore, was returned to her prior employment position as a CAO analyst.
- There are no facts to support Ms. Webb’s allegation that her disqualification was based upon gender or age.”

Even in the lawsuit Webb admits she does not have the

education requirements for the IT job: "Plaintiff realized that she did not even meet county's minimum qualifications for the principal administrative analyst position, even though she had on or about Feb. 12, 2014, plaintiff finally met with (Human Resources Director Pamela) Knorr regarding the ageist comments (District Attorney Vern) Pierson had repeatedly made, and the ominous tone he took about plaintiff's future employment as county IT Director. Much to plaintiff's dismay and disappointment, Knorr brushed aside Pierson's actions, and chalked up plaintiff's concern over these issues as plaintiff 'over-reacting' and being 'overly sensitive.' Rather than doing the HR director's job and investigating obvious, unlawful ageism, Knorr made plaintiff feel like a mere complainer without a valid complaint," the suit says.

During the time period Webb said she was being harassed and discriminated against there were also negative things coming out about her. The state Controller's Office issued a negative audit report in August 2013 about IT's cost accounting and the knowledge level of IT's management.

A 2014 survey of county employees found that 41 percent of the IT employees were dissatisfied with their employment.

In the suit, Webb is asking for:

- economic damages in an amount according to proof;
- for punitive damages against the individual, non-entity defendants only;
- for general damages in an amount according to proof;
- for costs of suit, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys' fees;
- for prejudgment interest in an amount according to proof;
- for such other and further relief as the court may deem proper.
- a trial by jury.

Few states ready for fallout if court rules against Obamacare

By Noam N. Levey, Los Angeles Times

Millions of Americans could soon lose health insurance when the Supreme Court decides the latest challenge to the Affordable Care Act this month, but states have made few concrete plans to deal with the potential fallout, and they may get little help from Washington, President Obama warned Monday.

“If somebody does something that doesn’t make any sense, then, it’s hard ... to fix,” the president said, suggesting his administration can’t do much if the justices side with the health law’s Republican critics.

When the court rules this month, the justices may eliminate insurance subsidies in as many as 37 states that use the federal HealthCare.gov marketplace established through the health law. The law’s challengers argue that a strict reading of the statute makes those subsidies available only in states that established their own marketplaces, rather than having the federal government operate the marketplace for them.

A state could restore the aid if it runs its own marketplace, as California and 12 other states and the District of Columbia already do.

Read the whole story