

Nevadans saddled with large amount of debt

By Jeanne Sahadi, CNN Money

NEW YORK – Americans have a debt problem.

An estimated 1 in 3 adults with a credit history – or 77 million people – are so far behind on some of their debt payments that their account has been put “in collections.”

That’s a key finding from an Urban Institute study.

It examined non-mortgage debt, including credit card bills, car loans, medical bills, child support payments and even parking tickets.

The debt in collections ranged from as little as \$25 to a whopping \$125,000. But the average amount owed was \$5,200.

Geographically, no area of the country is untouched.

Among the states, Nevada had the highest percentage of residents with debt in collections – 47 percent – as well as the highest average amount owed – \$7,198. That was helped in part by the Las Vegas metro area, where 49 percent of residents had debt in collections.

Read the whole story

Drone disrupts CalFire air

space at Sand Fire

By Dan Whitcomb, Reuters

A private drone trying to film a wildfire that has charred nearly six square miles in Northern California briefly disrupted firefighting efforts, although workers had gained the upper hand against the blaze, officials said on Monday.

Fire officials spotted the drone over the Sand Fire on Sunday and immediately called police to find the drone's owner and have the toy grounded to avoid a possible mid-air collision, a California fire official said.

"That drone was flying within our air space and was a hazard for our aircraft," said CalFire spokesman Kevin Lucero. "It essentially inhibited some of our operations going on."

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office told the *Sacramento Bee* it was investigating the incident. It said the drone's owner was a hobbyist trying to film the blaze.

Read the whole story

CTC funds restoration of old campground



This cement filled culvert will be removed as part of the restoration efforts at the old Tahoe Pines Campground. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

For the first time in more than 80 years, an 8-acre parcel in Meyers is about to look a lot more like it did before white people took over the Lake Tahoe Basin.

At the California Tahoe Conservancy board meeting this month, \$650,000 was allocated to the restoration of the former Tahoe Pines Campground. (Board members Norma Santiago, Karen Finn and John Hopper were absent.)

In 1932 Alma Mater started the campground. From 1983 until when the CTC bought the land for \$4.19 million in 2007 the Poulen family ran it. When the Conservancy board was given a tour of the area in 2008, Greg Poulen told many stories about the flood of 1996. A loud clang would echo through the campground. Another barbecue pit from one of the 59 campsites had been dislodged and was banging along the rocks in the raging river.

“The ground is smashed from years of automobiles. We will try to get rid of the soft coverage and grow some vegetation,” Peter Eichar, lead planner for the site, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s heavily armored. There are culverts filled with

concrete. We will get rid of the debris.”

Work will take place over the course of next summer.

While the public is allowed to access the area today, in a year it should be even a more pleasant place to visit.

“Passive recreation improvements, such as picnic tables, benches, a new bridge, and walking trails will complement the restoration objectives,” the staff report says.

But no one expects it to be a destination spot. No trailheads are being built. And the terrain does not link up with any other trails.

It could be a parking area for cyclists, though. Conservancy officials have noticed people using the area to park and then ride South Upper Truckee Road. Caltrans is putting in a Class 2 bike lane along Highway 50 that will be directly in front of the old campground. This, then, will link to the Pat Lowe bike trail.

The current pavement will be removed and a new parking area with 12 slots will be installed.

The major improvements to the site are environmental. The streambed will become more natural like it was before the campground. This means removing the culverts, some of the boulders, and planting vegetation to stabilize the banks of the Upper Truckee River.

LTWC caring for 9 bear cubs

By Riya Bhattacharjee, NBC

It's been three months since the adorably cute baby bear Tahoe arrived at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care center, capturing the imagination of hundreds across the country.

The story of her survival – she was mysteriously left on a doorstep one night and transported to LTWC – is a happy one, thanks to her caretakers Tom and Cheryl Millham, who bottle-fed her and looked after her every need.

Now, the Millhams have their hands full with eight new bear cubs at LTWC, the only place in California licensed to care for wild bear cubs.

No one really knows the reason for so many black bear cubs showing up at once. All the cubs are orphans with one exception, Meyers, who was hit by a car at 5 months old.

Millham hopes that all nine cubs will be ready to go back into the wild in about seven months.

Until then, this is home.

LTWC is getting ready to move to a bigger \$10 million, 27-acre space nearby and has already raised \$3 million towards it.

The center relies entirely on donations, which funds everything from food – it costs about \$800 per week to feed growing cubs – to special cages and medicine.

Read the whole story

Nevada is a lead character for many authors

By John Przybys, Las Vegas Review-Journal

It's where ranchers fight over water rights, demons prowl the Las Vegas Strip, Basque sheepherders reconnect with family back home and rural residents live out ordinary daily dramas. A place where storytellers with a bit of imagination can craft anything from a Western to a techno-thriller to a spy story against the backdrop of everything from wide-open desert to neon-filled urban clutter.

It's Nevada, which, thanks to its demographic, geographic and cultural diversity, serves as the setting for stories in just about every genre of literature – even if its roster of homegrown authors with widespread literary acclaim is, frankly, a bit shorter than it ought to be.

Maybe, Sally Denton figures, it has something to do with the Eastern literary establishment's jaundiced view of the American West.

"I've always been kind of struck by this kind of anti-Western bent in general," said Denton, a fourth-generation Nevadan who grew up in Boulder City and whose works of narrative nonfiction include "The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America."

"It seems to me there was always this sense of the American West as kind of a poor relation to the Eastern literary elite," Denton said. "And Nevada seems to be, even, the bastard child of the Western group. I never could understand why."

Yet, "I cannot tell you how many times I've been contacted by Eastern fiction writers who want to write about Las Vegas,"

Denton added. “But you can’t crack Las Vegas if you haven’t really lived it.”

The truth is, Nevada – the real Nevada – can serve as “a setting for some really evocative literature,” Denton said, “and I think that’s one of the things Mark Twain captured.”

Read the whole story

Bike Coalition angry with Measure R spending

By Kathryn Reed

Money for bike trails or their maintenance was reduced by \$10,000 on Friday by the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority board.

The money is going to the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. Two of the three JPA board members are also on the TPRID board – El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago and Judy Clot. South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner is the third JPA member.

At the annual financial meeting of the JPA board on July 25 there was an agenda item to up the TPRID allotment to \$60,000 this year, a \$10,000 increase. At the January board meeting TPRID will be tasked with bringing a proposal as to why it should receive even more money from Measure R funds beyond the stipulated \$50,000 and this additional \$10,000.

Voters in 2011 approved Measure R to replace Measure S, which was passed in 2000. South Shore residents on the California side pay \$18 per year in property taxes for the measure. It

sunsets in 2030.



Measure R allows old bike trails to be overhauled, like this one in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Measure R loosened how money could be spent.

The key changes from S to R included giving ball fields \$500,000 upfront. This is because the number of fields that Measure S was to build was never going to happen. The new wording allowed improvement to existing fields. It also allowed existing bike trails to be rehabbed. Bike trails would get more money after the fields got theirs, including any excess that would arrive via increased property taxes and/or bond refinancing. It was a gamble the bike community was willing to take – that there would be sufficient money.

The resolution says, “If funds remain after all of the above authorized and necessary funding has been provided for renovation of separated bicycle trails as provided in Facilities paragraph #5 and all of the above authorized and necessary funding has been provided for maintenance of bicycle trails as provided in Services paragraphs #3 and #4, such funds may be used, with the concurrence of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, for other bicycle related facilities, services, and/or programs within the CFD that promote and/or enhance bicycling within the CFD.”

Here is a copy of the resolution.

It does not say Tahoe Paradise or any other entity can tap into the funds.

Chuck Nelson, president of Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, read a letter to the JPA board last week admonishing it for taking money from the bike community, especially without consulting the Bicycle Advisory Committee. The committee makes recommendations to the JPA board about how Measure R bike money should be spent.

John Upton, the lone staff member for the JPA, agreed the committee should have been consulted and said it would be going forward.

However, he and the three board members – especially Santiago and Conner – got into a debate with Nelson about what Measure R really says. Santiago and Conner were adamant that they could spend “extra” money however they want.

“Why does there need to be constant argument that the bike community is being cheated?” Conner said in a heated voice. “I really wish we could look at the bigger picture. I’d like to see an attitude of cooperation rather than argumentative.”

Upton, Santiago and Nelson were on Santiago’s one-time KTHO-AM 590 radio show prior to the 2011 vote. During the more than 20-minute show the three discussed where “extra” money goes. Bikes was the answer – at least at that time.

Despite the tiff over where money should be going, there are several bike projects in the works.

Shay Navarro, who is on the Bicycle Advisory Committee of the JPA, gave an overview of the work being done throughout South Lake Tahoe. This includes work behind McDonald’s at the Y, the trail behind Motel 6-Meeks, and near Harrison Avenue. Replacing the Trout Creek and Upper Truckee River bridges are

also part of these projects.

All of the work should be done by the end of August.

If the work comes in under budget, the JPA board voted to spend \$10,000 on a pilot snow removal program the bike committee wants to embark on. The committee plans to ask South Lake Tahoe for matching funds, of which Conner said should not be a problem to secure.

Santiago said the county is finalizing a contract to have snow removed on the Pat Lowe bike trail in Meyers.

She added that county staff is looking at a way to connect the Pat Lowe trail to the corner of Pioneer Trail and Highway 50. There is about a 200-foot gap that needs to be filled. This would be across California Tahoe Conservancy land, which Santiago said would not be a problem. (She sits on that board.)

"Caltrans is saying (they) don't want you to do it because then (they) would have to put in a crosswalk," Santiago said. "I say screw them. We have a connectivity issue."

Caltrans this summer is slated to put in a crosswalk that goes north-south across Highway 50 at that intersection. Extending the bike trail would require one going east-west on Pioneer.

Santiago said the Sawmill Road bike trail and Lake Tahoe Boulevard enhancement projects should be done by the end of the grading season.

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Notes:

The JPA board will continue its July 25 meeting to Aug. 1 at 9am in the downstairs conference room at Lake Tahoe Airport to discuss the annual audit.

Sand Fire animal rescue coordination lacking



El Dorado County Fairgrounds has plenty of room to take more horses from the Sand Fire. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed and Susan Wood

PLACERVILLE – Lack of communication is affecting people who have horses in the Sand Fire area.

The CalFire recording says the El Dorado County Fairgrounds is not accepting horses and that instead they will be taken to Rancho Murieta, but that is not the reality.

Twenty-eight horses were at the fairgrounds as of Sunday afternoon. There are eight more stalls to accommodate at least 20 more horses and a 2-acre pasture nearby. Lead volunteer coordinator of the effort, Kevin Banks, told *Lake Tahoe News* with what's been lined up in El Dorado County, about 60 to 100 more animals can be taken in.

He was busy working the phone near the arena of the

fairgrounds on July 27 securing spots and trying to find out why El Dorado County Animal Services wants animals to go farther than they have to.

Banks showed up at the fairgrounds on Saturday to do what he could. He said there is no official plan in place that he is aware of for people to deal with animal evacuations in a case like this.

The fire started July 25 when a vehicle drove onto dry vegetation. The blaze has burned 3,800 acres and is 50 percent containment, with 10 houses and seven outbuildings lost. Evacuations and road closures are still in place.



Rita Uhren and Chris Navratil clean stalls at the fairgrounds where they are caring for evacuated horses.

It is burning in the wine regions of El Dorado and Amador counties. Unlike Saturday, the smoke on Sunday afternoon was not visible nor could one smell it in the American River canyon.

One inmate firefighter was hurt.

Small animals – like domestic pets, goats and sheep – are being housed at Ponderosa High School in Shingle Springs.

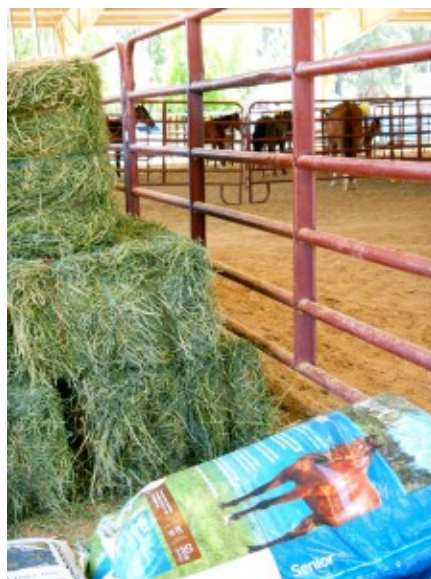
The fairgrounds has the horses.

Helping Banks on Sunday with the horses were Rita Uhren, Jamie Buetler and Chris Navratil. Navratil works for Nickers Horse Sitting. They are coordinating efforts, secure boarding, cleaning stalls, feeding animals and making sure horses have water.

One stud was a bit restless and had to have his pen reinforced so he wouldn't get out.

"My horse was evacuated during the Santa Cruz fire, and I just thought that I should help out here while their houses are being threatened. These are beautiful animals," Uhren told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A couple of the horses are unidentified because they got loose and it wasn't their owner who brought them to safety.



Donations of feed for horses is needed.

Lee's Feed & Western Store in Shingle Springs has been the primary store to donate supplies – mostly hay and other food. The store is also accepting donations that will be passed along to those caring for animals rescued from the Sand Fire.

Banks and Buetler didn't give much credit to the coordinating agencies. They said county Animal Control, which *Lake Tahoe*

News is trying to reach, and South County Large Animal Rescue have provided misinformation on space and are sending people down to a Sacramento-area facility.

SCLAR, which is based in Somerset, does not self-deploy, but instead has to be requested by Animal Services.

SCLAR told *Lake Tahoe News* animals are usually taken to a predetermined location, and that is usually Rancho Murieta, though some will go to the fairgrounds or a ranch that an owner requests.

Aimee Vukovich, director of SCLAR, said horses, pigs and goats have been picked up from the Sand Fire.

“We provide transportation for animals that are in danger where people evacuate and whatever reason they can’t get them out,” Vukovich told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We try not to leave anything behind.”

She did not have a count on the number of animals they have retrieved.

Nev. casino revenue hits \$11.2 bil. for fiscal year

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

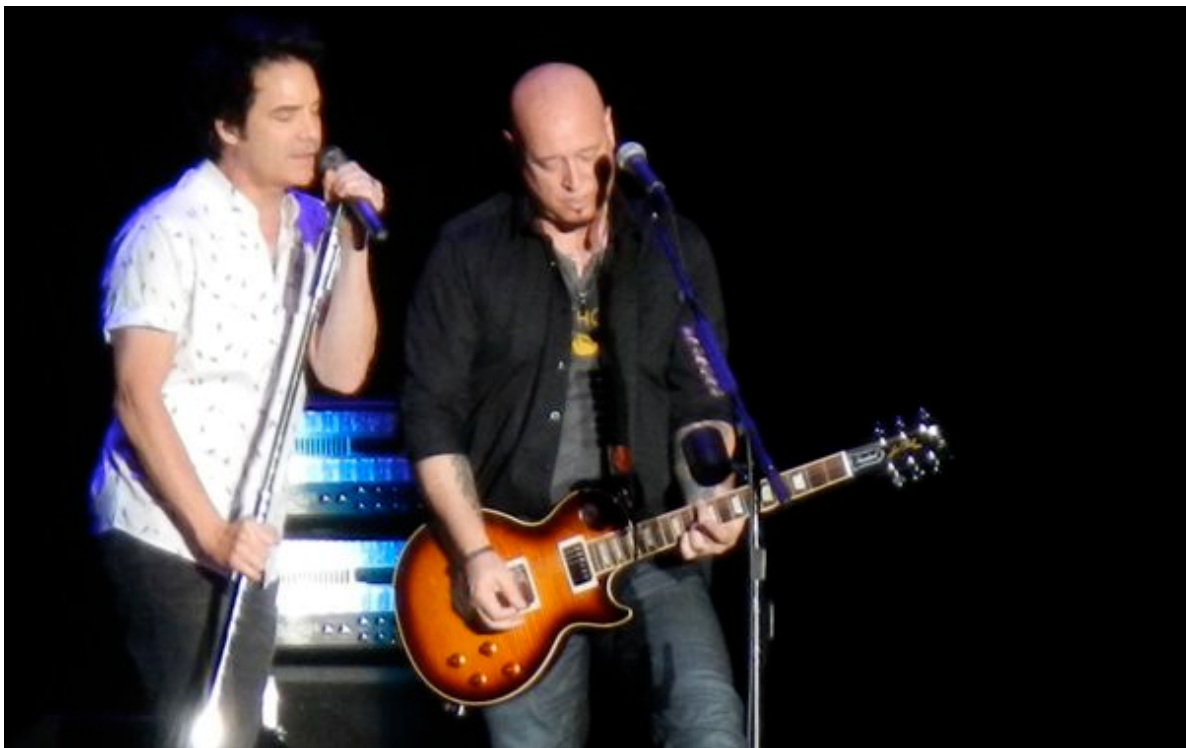
CARSON CITY — Nevada casinos reported revenues of \$11.2 billion last fiscal year, up 2.9 percent from the prior year.

The increase was due mainly to baccarat. Casinos won \$1.6 billion on baccarat games, a jump of 18.3 percent compared to the prior fiscal year and an all-time high.

“Baccarat is driving the bus,” said Michael Lawton, senior research analyst for the state Gaming Control Board, which released figures July 25 for the 12-month period that ended June 30.

Read the whole story

Train nails it with old and new tracks



Pat Monahan and Jimmy Stafford founded the San Francisco band Train. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – It didn’t take long to realize Americana rock band Train would transport its audience through time during Friday night’s outdoor summer concert series at Harveys.

After a notable, guitar-driven opening act by Striking Matches – which with one album out already has songs featured on the show “Nashville,” a train whistle launched the 20-year-old San Francisco-based band onto the stage.

People immediately rose to their feet with the opening number and 2003 mega hit “Calling All Angels.”

The enthusiastic crowd sang “I won’t give up if you don’t give up” with such zeal, it may have been heard at the top of Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The high-energy show July 25 never let up or down.

The song “Save Me San Francisco” kept people on their feet.

The 2009 hit was written after what lead guitarist Jimmy Stafford described to *Lake Tahoe News* as a three-year slowing down for the band, which he and lead singer Pat Monahan founded in San Francisco. Their tenure together has produced eight albums.



Jimmy Stafford brings the crowd to its feet with his guitar riffs.

“We felt like we wanted to get back to our Bay Area roots

because we didn't know if anybody cared about us any more," Stafford said.

The move paid off. It became their second career top hit, and the doubt about the band's popularity disappeared.

With "Get to Me," and its lyrics of whether to "parasail or first class mail," Monahan threw his head back in complete abandon with a perfect segue to the band's second Billboard top 20 hit "Meet Virginia." Monahan sang it like a slam poet.

Stafford, with his heavily tattooed arms, commanded the stage at one point for a noteworthy guitar solo.

Train has proven to stand the test of time and lived up to its think-outside-the-box, diverse reputation. Beyond the rock-pop sound, the band also gave the audience a taste of a little Latin with its popular number "50 Ways to Say Goodbye."

During that rhythm-induced tune, Monahan said Stafford asked to say goodbye to several Train T-shirts. In throwing them out, Monahan even hinted to having "an arm like Tim Lincecum" – referencing the Cy Young award-winning San Francisco Giants pitcher.

With its known ability to write songs of a different genre and play a variety of instruments ranging from ukulele for Stafford and saxophone for Monahan, the band has never seemed confined to being pigeon-holed in one music category. Band members seem to thrive on the unexpected – even while the fans expect a sound they follow and revere.

"We pride ourselves on that," Stafford told *LTN*.

In the early days, Train played in small venues at Lake Tahoe while staying at the late singer Donna Summer's house and enjoying Bloody Mary's at Rosie's in Tahoe City, according to the 50-year-old Illinois musician. And, the band hasn't given up experimenting with varying arena sizes or trying out

different genres.

Along the lines of his garage-band roots, Monahan even provided a sampling of the legendary rock band Led Zeppelin with his distinct interpretation of lead Robert Plant's bellowing voice. Later he channeled no less than Bob Marley for a taste of Reggae. And for one of the encores, the band belted out "Dream On" of Aerosmith, which is coming to town next month.

But for the most part, it was all about Train and its songs.



Several women are invited on stage to sing and take selfies with Pat Monahan.

Many from the excited multi-generational crowd at Harveys danced, swayed, fist-pumped, screamed and mouthed most of the lyrics to their numerous hit songs. And, the Grammy award-winning band was more than accommodating to get the audience into it – even in pictures, as Monahan admitted to going “crazy a little bit” at taking selfies with cameras from the front.

If that wasn't enough for being up close and personal, Monahan

brought more than 30 women on stage to dance and sing the “Mermaid” song from the 2012 album “California 37” – named for the Bay Area highway.

“I’ve never been so scared in my life. You girls were hunting me down like I was the last garment at the mall,” Monahan joked later.

Major fans Laura Edgar, 48, of Mill Valley and her two daughters Erin, 12, and Chelsea, 14, described a freeing experience when they blast the band’s music while they’re riding on Highway 37. The trio painted their fingernails with mermaids for the occasion and didn’t miss a beat when it came to celebrating the show, which offered a trip down memory lane.

“It’s happy music we can sing to in the car,” the mother said, adding: “It’s clean – they’re genuine and authentic.”

Edgar likes that Monahan sings about his life and means what he sings. Evidence of that was proven with his heart-filled “When I Look to the Sky,” one of Monahan’s self-proclaimed favorite songs that serves as a dedication to “anybody who has ever lost anyone.” (The line: “something tells me you’re here with me” reduced this writer to tears.)

After all, Train’s biggest hit “Drops of Jupiter” was written as an emotional tribute to Monahan having lost his mother to cancer, according to Stafford.

“(Monahan) woke up from a dream and felt strongly she had come to him. He had a vision of her floating in space,” Stafford said.

The band has just sold its 1 millionth bottle on its wine label that supports “Family House,” a Bay Area nonprofit to benefit children with cancer.

Train further showed its heart with a rather poignant version

of “Marry Me.” Stafford, who closed his eyes playing most of the song, earlier told Lake Tahoe News that some in the audience through the years have either proposed or gotten married on stage to the 2010 hit tune. (Drummer Drew Shoals is an ordained minister.)

The band’s musical ability has always transcended, as shown with Monahan helping Shoals on the drums during one of their earliest recordings “Free.” And the members show no sign of slowing down. They served up their latest “Angel in Blue Jeans” off their soon-to-be-released album. The song has a hint of the new band Of Monsters and Men with their “Little Talks.”

The audience was certainly receptive to Train’s latest tune, which resembled music one could ride a horse to.

But then again, it was the signature older numbers that got the biggest response. The screams were loud and long near the end of the show during “Hey Soul Sister” off the 2009 “Save Me San Francisco” album. And Monahan appeared to work so hard on stage to entertain, he seemed out of breath. But then he picked up the pace further with the bouncy hit “Drive By.”

When the band left the stage, one man could be heard saying: “Drops of Jupiter.” Train didn’t disappoint when it served up its biggest hit for the encore.

“These are the songs that still put smiles on people’s faces, and that’s why we do them,” Stafford, who admitted to living his dream as a child, said in the interview.

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Notes:

Harvey’s Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with:

- July 30 Journey, Steve Miller Band
- Aug. 2 Lady Gaga

- Aug. 3 Boston, Doobie Brothers
- Aug. 8 Aerosmith, Slash
- Aug. 14 Bruno Mars
- Aug. 16 Sammy Hagar and Friends
- Aug. 24 Rascal Flats, Sheryl Crow
- Aug. 29-30 Eagles.

Election to replace Nutting stirs up EDC

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

At the Cielo Estate winery in Shingle Springs, political upheaval in El Dorado County seemed to drift away momentarily Wednesday evening as a gentle breeze faintly ruffled leaves of heritage oaks.

Inside a reception room, as guests sipped Sierra foothills Pinot Grigio, five of the six special election candidates for District 2 supervisor politely discussed pointed matters of development, traffic and water.

A 45-minute drive away in Fair Play, guests at the hacienda-style Perry Creek Winery listened to soft guitar music, nibbled finger foods and raised glasses of Zinfandel in a fundraiser for the other District 2 candidate, Jennifer Nutting.

Yet such pastoral settings are ultimately unable to obscure the bitterness, dysfunction and strangeness of the

supervisory special election that roil El Dorado County these days.

After a politically charged prosecution, visiting Superior Court Judge Timothy S. Buckley on June 6 ordered four-term Supervisor Ray Nutting ousted from office over misdemeanor convictions for improperly raising bail money. Nutting's wife, Jennifer, is now running for his seat, even as he seeks to halt the Sept. 9 special election.

Last week, Nutting sought a judicial stay of the vote in a writ that claimed his rights were violated by his removal. He charged that the judge wrongfully "excluded me from my office, withheld my salary ... and prohibited me from performing my duties" based on an unproven allegation of official misconduct.

The state's 3rd District Court of Appeal is not required to rule before the special election. If the court fails to act by Sept. 9, the winner will fill the District 2 seat. And even if he prevails on appeal, Nutting won't be able to reclaim the office – though can sue the county for damages.

So as the legal challenges fester, and with no guarantee of a vote, five special-election candidates met at the Cielo Estate forum. Before about 100 people, they weighed in on proposed subdivision developments and traffic-inducing projects and sparred over who best could protect the county's rustic flavor.

Read the whole story