

AAA: Most Americans in 12 years to travel for Thanksgiving

By Barbara J. Powell, Bloomberg

U.S. Thanksgiving travel will jump to the highest level since 2005 boosted by a stronger economy, even as gasoline prices will be higher than a year earlier.

About 50.9 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home for the Nov. 22-Nov. 26 holiday period, the ninth consecutive increase and a 3.3 percent jump over a year earlier, AAA said in an emailed report. About 45.5 million will travel by automobile, up 3.2 percent. Air travel will rise 5 percent to nearly 4 million.

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Plenty of snow on mountaintop as Heavenly opens



Winter has definitely arrived at Heavenly as evidenced Nov. 17 by the snow at the top of Tamarack chair looking down. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Opening day at Heavenly Mountain Resort was delayed a few hours, but that didn't seem to bother the hundreds of people who were making tracks Friday for the first time this season.

It did make for a bit of a long day for those who arrived at 6:30am to ensure they'd be first in line.

Roy Lambert of Gardnerville, Michael Brown of Stateline and Kouri Penn of South Lake Tahoe had the lock on the front row. There's about 15 in their posse. They consider themselves the first chair club. They've been at it for more than a dozen years.

It's the rush, being with friends and beating the crowds that has them wanting that first gondola carriage of the season.



Roy Lambert, from left, Michael Brown and Kouri Penn are ready for the first gondola car of the season at Heavenly on Nov. 17. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The day started late because Tamarack chair needed to be deiced. It was the only lift running, which is normal for the start of the season.

The snow, though, was awesome. As one man from Carson City said, it was like January snow.

On the mountain it's like a frosty winter wonderland where the trees are wrapped in a thick layer of snow.

Snow is being made as well, which will speed up the process for more terrain to be opened. Expect Dipper to be the next lift to spin.

For Art Bonfert of Auburn, he's been to opening day the last four years – a treat since retiring.

"The skiing is never good, but it's just the fact you can be here," Bonfert told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is his 49th year to ski Heavenly. Last year he got in 75 days, this year he's hoping for 100.



It was hard to smell the fresh mountain air in the Tamarack line on Nov. 17. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Jesse Sopoaga of Monterey has been hearing his buddy's stories about snowboarding and knew it was time to share in the fun. He rented equipment at home, pulled the appropriate clothing together, stayed over Thursday and was ready hours before the gondola was open. He paid \$109 for the experience.

His friend Jeff Oda of Pinole has an Epic Tahoe pass. Tahoe is his place to unwind from the stresses of the Bay Area. This, though, was his first opening day.

It seemed to be a bit of a party atmosphere in the Tamarack lift line with all the smoking – cigarettes, pot, vaping – and the alcohol being consumed. Even though the resort has signs not to partake in those activities in line, staff wasn't doing anything about it. It was hard to miss the smell and not see the big puffs of smoke.

Perhaps once more terrain opens it won't be such a nuisance to those not consuming.

Northstar was supposed to open Nov. 17 as well, but the storm brought more rain than snow to the Truckee resort. It is now slated to open Nov. 23.

Squaw Valley opened Nov. 17, Mount Rose is open, Mammoth is open, Kirkwood is set to open Nov. 22, and other resorts are waiting on Mother Nature to help cover the slopes with white stuff. Another storm system is expected to reach Tahoe starting Sunday night. It is best to check the website of each ski resort to see if it is open as well as how much terrain is skiable.

Calif. may reach 50% renewable power goal 10 years early

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

Two years ago, Gov. Jerry Brown signed an ambitious law ordering California utility companies to get 50 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

It looks like they may hit that goal a decade ahead of

schedule.

An annual report issued Monday by California regulators found that the state's three big, investor-owned utilities – Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric Co. – are collectively on track to reach the 50 percent milestone by 2020, although individual companies could exceed the mark or fall just short of it.

Read the whole story

3 Dems tout reasons to represent Tahoe in DC



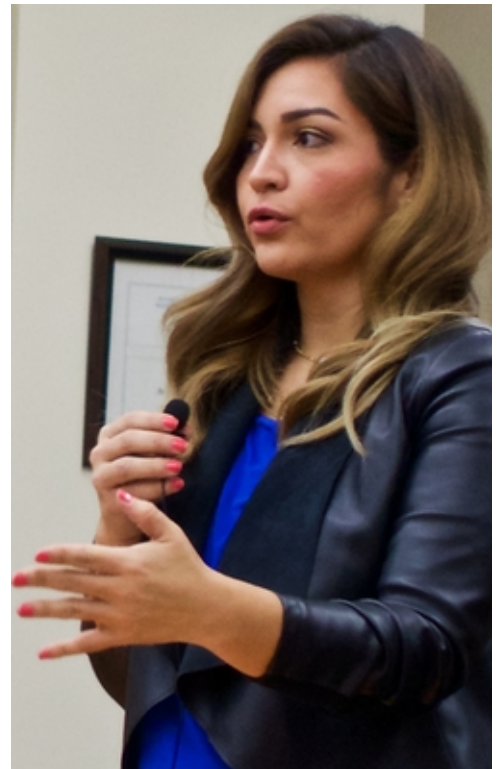
Regina Bateson has a doctorate in political science from Yale and

was most recently
teaching at MIT.

By Kathryn Reed

Flip the district blue. That is the goal of the three Democrats running for the 4th Congressional District, which includes the California side of Lake Tahoe and Truckee.

Candidates Regina Bateson, Roza Calderon and Jessica Morse spent more than two hours Nov. 16 sharing with more than 100 people at Lake Tahoe Community College why they should be elected next year to represent this area in Washington.



Roza Calderon is a
refugee from El
Salvador, and works as
a geo-scientist for
state and federal
agencies specializing
in agricultural and
environmental land

management.

Republican Tom McClintock has had the seat since 2009. Prior to him, Republican John Doolittle was in the office from 1993-2009.

The challengers have an uphill battle in a predominantly Republican district. But they have done something their predecessors have not done in previous election cycles, and that is to get the attention of the Democratic Party. It's possible there will be state and national money flowing to the campaign to unseat McClintock, who in the past had not appeared to be vulnerable enough for those dollars.



Jessica Morse is a fifth generation Northern Californian who has worked as a national security strategist for the U.S. State Department, Department of Defense

and USAID.

Still, they offer voters much more than a change in party and gender. One is an immigrant who is a geo-scientist, one has taught at MIT, one worked as a national security strategist.

They were each asked what their plans are to flip the district.

Calderon: A strength is being a community organizer. She's going after the Latinos who often don't vote. She wants the money out of politics.

Bateson: A strong grass roots campaign is her strategy. She wants a pragmatic, practical approach to solving issues, and is visiting groups who are not allies.

Morse: She comes from a Republican family, so has started with a listening tour; she is addressing issues from a community perspective, not a partisan one.

The three agree on a few things:

- They support the Second Amendment. They don't want to take guns away. They do want stricter background checks.
- They want a clean Dream Act to pass.
- All believe more needs to be done to combat climate change.
- None will take money from big corporations.
- All mentioned fire and preventing one are two of the most serious issues facing this area.
- Changing Citizens United is a goal.
- The federal government needs to catch up with the states where cannabis is concerned; and rules need to be created so the marijuana industry can be part of the banking

community and not just a cash business.

- All will support the other to beat McClintock.

Then there are the differences:

- Calderon and Bateson support a carbon tax.
- Calderson does not support a total ban on fracking.
- Morse believes broadband and vocational training will help with rural poverty.
- Bateson and Calderon believe health care is a right.
- Bateson wants to save and improve the Affordable Care Act.
- Morse supports a single payer model for health care.
- Morse believes teachers should be treated like doctors, paid six figures, there should be investment in vocational education and early education.
- Calderon doesn't want public funds to be used to compete against public education.
- Bateson does not support public charter schools.
- Calderon wants to strengthen unions and increase minimum wage.
- Bateson says to expand the earned income tax credit, invest in smart infrastructure and be business friendly.
- Morse advocates for broadband, green jobs, and access to vocational training.
- Bateson would like to be on committees dealing with immigration, natural resources, and education and workforce.
- Calderon wants to be on the education and workforce

committee.

· Morse is interested in the national resources, appropriations and intelligence committees.

Barton Health nurses fed up; vote for union

By Kathryn Reed

Nurses from Barton Memorial Hospital and Lake Tahoe Surgery Center have voted to join the California Nurses Association.

The vote this week marks the first time for any group within the South Shore-based health conglomerate to unionize. In a secret ballot conducted by the National Labor Relations Board on Nov. 15 the vote was 123-17 to join CNA. Barton employs 205 registered nurses, with about three-quarters of them working for one of the two entities that elected to join the union.

When the hospital opened 54 years ago this month there were 20 employees besides the 18 physicians and five dentists.

Nurses and other workers throughout the health care system have been disgruntled with their employer for some time, citing work conditions, training and issues with upper management.



Barton Health nurses celebrate joining the California Nurses Association. Photo/Provided

Nurses only had contact with their immediate boss and the nursing director – not upper management. Their concerns were not addressed to their liking, so they opted in late October to call for the vote to unionize.

“I think for every department it was a little bit different issue. But the basic issue was how our problems in each department affected patient care,” Ulla Reinitzer, a registered nurse with Barton for 12 years, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The health organization has multiple departments where nurses work, not all are in the hospital. They include labor and delivery, like where Reinitzer works, ICU, emergency room, hospice, clinics and many others.

Reinitzer said the big thing for her department is the staffing shortage. Three of the nurses working nights – which represents half the staff – are traveling nurses who are hired on a short-term basis.

She said there has been an undercurrent of problems at the hospital for years, but recently it’s gotten worse.

Jennifer Lemmon with the California Nurses Association told *Lake Tahoe News*, "At the end of the day what the nurses are most concerned about is having all the tools they need to provide high quality patient care, appropriate staffing, meals and breaks so have rest periods because that also impacts patient care."

She added that they are also concerned about training. Nurses often are told to work in a unit outside of their specialty and don't always have the training to do so, according to Lemmon.

The next step is for the nurses to elect board members and designate a negotiating team. From there, a contract between the nurses and Barton will be created.

"Barton Health respects the nurses' decision and right to join a union. We remain committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care together," CEO Clint Purvance told *Lake Tahoe News*.

What he didn't answer is: What will this mean for the hospital? Why did the administration oppose the nurses joining the union?

Wages and other benefits will be other items for the two sides to come to agreement on.

California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee/AFL-CIO first started in 1903 and now represents nurses in every state.

Nev. health exchange eyes return to state-run site

By Yvonne Gonzalez, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's health exchange is looking to once again run its own enrollment site, a move off the healthcare.gov platform that could save the state millions of dollars.

The Silver State Health Exchange is planning to issue a request for information in December and will likely issue a request for proposal in March, said Heather Korbolic, the agency's executive director. She said the healthcare.gov platform limits the exchange's access to information and how much time customers can spend shopping for plans.

"We'll just take the same business processes that we use with healthcare.gov right now and remove healthcare.gov and put in private technology," she said. "So we limit any kind of disruption."

Read the whole story

Lakefront home demand alters building schedule

By Susan Wood

In a matter of minutes, the Douglas County Planning Commission took a 15-year concept and paved the way for more lakefront property to be sold at Stateline – a rarity in Tahoe that could be a reflection of a flourishing housing market.

The first of three phases of the Tahoe Beach Club condominium project envisioned in 2002 had called for 46 units where the Tahoe Shores Mobile Home Park once sat at the end of Kahle Drive.

While anticipating the county Board of Commissioners will accept planning's recommendation in December to change the tentative map, the Beach Club is set for the number of units to increase to 101 in the current phase. The total number of 143 as well as the footprint of the project approved by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency did not change with the Nov. 14 Planning Commission approval.

This plan revision is "something that can be done at staff level," TRPA spokesman Tom Lotshaw pointed out.

Sales have been robust – with 37 of those first 46 one- to six-bedroom units already under contract with owners. Albeit considered a technicality in satisfying a Nevada Real Estate Division rule, the tentative map change allows more of two- to four-bedroom units to be built sooner. The units span from about 1,100- to 4,000-square-feet.



Tahoe Beach Club will be high-end housing designed as second homes.

More than \$80 million in sales have been racked up since the whole-ownership condo concept started selling at \$1.3 million

and up. The overall 13-building project broke ground in August 2016. Looking ahead, owners are expected to occupy the five structures in the first and second phases by next fall, with reservations on Phase 2 opening near Thanksgiving, project developer Tom Castaneda told *Lake Tahoe News* on Wednesday.

The nearly 20-acre project also lists a clubhouse with athletic amenities, a swimming pool and stormwater treatment facilities. Two acres have been set aside for a stream environment zone. Scenic enhancements include the burying of power lines.

The project has come a long way since Castaneda and co-developer Bob Mecay invested in the property – one which may define location, location, location.

The land transformation brought a flurry of controversy to Douglas County over a decade ago because low-income residents were displaced and well aware of the bargain they had in the haven nestled between the pristine Nevada Beach on one side and the swank Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course on the other.

In looking back, Castaneda said he was glad the development team got through that process. Meeting after meeting was filled with crying residents. But a lot has happened since then. Some of the changes are reflective of a blossoming economy.

For one thing, Edgewood erected a hotel along the lake's South Shore, complete with a patio and restaurant overlooking the lake.

Castaneda commended Edgewood for the development and sees no competition there when asked if having lakefront rooms in the same neighborhood deters his sales in any way.

"I think they've done a wonderful job. The location is el primo, but it's a whole different thing. Do you want to live in a hotel room or do you want to own a piece of real estate?

And, you can't leave a hotel room as a legacy for your kids," he said, adding: "There are a lot of reasons to wanna own in Lake Tahoe. It's a lifestyle, and we're creating a lifestyle."

The entire length of Kahle Drive is expected to be overhauled in what planners call a complete street. Douglas County commissioners have an item on their agenda today about that project. They meet this afternoon in Stateline.

Powerful weather satellite will improve forecasting



The Joint Polar Satellite System 1 spacecraft is designed to ensure accurate weather forecasting. Photo/NOAA

By William Harwood, CBS News

The current three- to seven-day forecasts Americans have come to rely on for planning everything from weekend picnics to hurricane evacuations rely heavily on constant updates from satellites that orbit Earth's poles measuring temperature,

moisture and a host of other variables that define the planet's ever-changing weather.

Early Tuesday, NASA launched the first of four state-of-the-art polar orbiters for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a \$1.6 billion weather satellite that will monitor the entire planet as it rotates below, feeding computer models the data they need to make increasingly accurate predictions.

Forecasters and climatologists say it is difficult to overstate the importance of the new satellite, which will join a once experimental and now aging weather station already in polar orbit to ensure uninterrupted service.

Read the whole story

Body pulled from Fallen Leaf Lake presumed to be missing woman, second unknown corpse recovered

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County sheriff's officials believe one of the bodies recovered recently from Fallen Leaf Lake is that of a woman who took her life after her son drowned in the same lake.

David Ward was 21 when the boat he was fishing in capsized. His buddy made it to shore, but Ward's body was never found. This was in 1996.

Five years later his mother left a suicide note saying she was “going to join her son,” according to the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

The Wisconsin-based search company **Bruce’s Legacy** found the woman’s body this summer, but EDSO officials were keeping the discovery under wraps until they could put all the pieces together. However, a positive ID has still not been confirmed.

EDSO specifically asked the company to stay in town after they’d been on Lake Tahoe for another rescue to help find the mother and son. Only the woman’s body was located on that search in August.

“The body was recovered from the lake and sent to the Sacramento County Coroner for an autopsy. DNA samples were sent to the California Department of Justice Crime Lab for identification. There was no indication of foul play. We have not received the results of the DNA testing,” EDSO said in a Nov. 15 press release.

Bruce’s Legacy was back at Fallen Leaf last month in hopes of finding Ward. Instead, on Oct. 27 they found a man’s body with an anchor tied to one leg.

“The body looked to have been in the lake for many years. It was apparent that we had located a body that we had not known of prior to his recovery. This is an ongoing investigation and it is not known if this is a case of homicide or suicide,” the press release said.

That body was also sent to Sacramento for an autopsy, and DNA sample to the crime lab.

Ward’s body remains missing.

At its deepest, Fallen Leaf is 415 feet.

Bruce’s Legacy in August recovered the body of Pham Dan Vu Thanh just north of Emerald Bay. He had gone kayaking by

himself on June 8 from D.L. Bliss State Park and was never heard from again. They also recovered the body of UNR football player Marc Ma in July, about one year after he went missing on the West Shore.

Keith Cormican and Beth DARTH through the nonprofit Bruce's Legacy travel the United States with a 22-foot Hewescraft boat in search of people who are presumed to have drowned.

Skiers spending fewer days on the slopes

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Money isn't keeping people off the ski slopes. It's that they have so many more options when it comes to how to spend their time.

That is something ski resort officials are trying to wrap their heads around.

Michael Reitzell, president of the California Ski Industry Association, said that while millennials are now the largest segment of skiers/snowboarders on the slopes, they are not participating as many days as baby boomers do. Baby boomers average 10 days a season on the mountain, while millennials are there half as many.

Nadia Guerriero, vice president and general manager of Northstar, talked about how people are looking for unique experiences. The runs themselves during a normal day are not always enough to keep people's attention anymore.

Daily Champagne, opportunities for first tracks, special

groomed runs – these are some of the ways Northstar is trying to add to the experience.

Reitzell and Guerriero were joined by Dave Rathbun from Sugar Bowl-Royal Gorge, and Casey Blann with Squaw Valley-Alpine Meadows, as the guest speakers at the Truckee Chamber of Commerce breakfast on Nov. 14.

Reitzell threw out the following stats from 2016-17:

- 7 million skier visits in California/Nevada; (In 2015-16 there were 7.3 million and 4.4 million in 2015-16.)
- 42 percent of visits were from season passholders
- 6 unscheduled closed days, which was double from the prior season
- snowboarding is up from 34.2 percent to 34.7 percent
- nationally, there were 54.7 skier visits, up 3.7 percent from 2015-16.

People waiting to have children and having fewer of them are contributing factors to a decline in young people learning the sport.

Guerriero said one trend is “the shift toward time being more scarce than money.”

To combat that sentiment, she said Northstar is “encouraging guests to come midweek for an easy, stress free experience.” This way people will have more time to actually ski because it’s less crowded.

Rathbun said Sugar Bowl is doing what it can to make the experience at the resort off Interstate 80 more pleasant this season. Simply adding more snow removal equipment to plow the road and parking lot will go a long way. The 795 inches the resort received last winter at times made it near impossible

for skiers to get to the resort, let alone park once they got there.

Sugar Bowl tends to rely on day skiers from the Sacramento area. They aren't taking public transit even if it were available.

Making the start of their day stress free is one of the ways to improve guest services.

Squaw Valley also recognizes it has a traffic issue, in particular on Highway 89 and then the road leading to the resort. Blann said a pilot program will start this season where a shuttle bus will have an exclusive lane. He said the resort is working with Placer County to improve the traffic quagmire.

Squaw also had a parking issue last season; to the point a snow melting mechanism was leased to get rid of the white stuff in the parking lot, and snow was also trucked out.

An issue that crosses generational lines is that people want to be connected on the slopes.

Sugar Bowl is working with Verizon to put in a transponder at one of the lodges. Reception at Alpine is near non-existent. They, too, are talking to Verizon. AT&T has talked about putting in a tower at Ward Peak. Northstar is in good shape, but is still looking to put in mono poles places.

Squaw and Northstar open Friday, with Sugar Bowl yet to set a date.