

# Report: CalPERS forces local gov't to cut other spending

By Adam Ashton, Sacramento Bee

California governments likely will make do with fewer teachers, parks employees and other public workers while they struggle to absorb fast-rising pension costs in the next few years, a former state lawmaker argues in a study released this week through Stanford University.

Former Democratic Assemblyman Joe Nation projects that many cities, counties and school districts will double their spending on pensions by 2030, "crowding out" their ability to fund public services.

The trend is an acceleration of the swelling pension costs that most California governments have recorded since the dot-com crash in the early 2000s, when pension plans that had been over-funded suddenly had to catch up with investment losses.

**Read the whole story**

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# Vegas shooter casts spotlight on high-limit gaming

By Jason Hidalgo and Sam Gross, Reno Gazette-Journal

The gunman at the center of the deadliest shooting in U.S. history did not leave much of an impression with his Reno neighbors.

Amid the bright lights and bustling din of the casinos he visited in the Biggest Little City, however, Stephen Paddock was instantly recognizable.

Before becoming known around the world as the man behind a shooting rampage that left 59 people dead and more than 500 injured at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas, Paddock was a familiar fixture among the staff at some of Reno's big hotel-casinos.

Matt Orchowski, 25, of Reno remembers running into Paddock a few times at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa's VIP lounge. Orchowski, now the general manager at Fitness For 10's downtown Reno branch, worked as a VIP representative at the Atlantis from 2014 to 2016. He was responsible for catering to the needs of high rollers, including checking them in and serving them drinks.

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# **Creative cocktails benefit mental health programs**



Original libations at Cocktails for a Cause on Oct. 4. Photos/Kathryn Reed

### **By Kathryn Reed**

A little bourbon might just have been the secret ingredient in what was a vodka themed cocktail contest.

Coldwater Brewery proved it's not just a beer joint. The South Lake Tahoe restaurant was the overall winner Wednesday night at the annual Cocktails for a Cause event. The bartenders also won the main cocktail contest and came in second for the mocktail – aka, the version without alcohol.

Now in its eighth year, the event is a fundraiser for the Barton Foundation. A certain cause within the South Shore-based health conglomerate is designated the beneficiary. This year it's mental and behavioral health services.

Mental health was a top concern in the 2012 and 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment. It's an area that Barton and other agencies in the area have been putting resources toward, with the hope of helping people in need as well as bringing awareness to an issue that is often not openly talked about. Although mental illness – which ranges from mild depression to schizophrenia – has touched most people's lives, it remains a

more delicate subject than a physical ailment.

The cocktail contest dovetails into Barton Foundation's big fundraiser in December – the **Festival of Trees and Lights**. The winning drink from the Oct. 4 event at Riva Grill will be served at the gala on Dec. 2.

The gang at Coldwater set out to make an adult Cherry Coke. The cherry cider mulled for a couple days to deepen the flavor profile. That's where the bourbon came in. There is a distinct clove taste in the finished product. This is a perfect fall-winter spice that is used in so many entrees and desserts, that this drink could complement several dishes.



**Winners:**

**Overall:** Coldwater

**Cocktails:** 1. Coldwater 2. Riva 3. McP's

**Mocktails:** 1. Heavenly 2. Coldwater 3. Riva

Triple sec, sweet vermouth, and Coke rounded out the drink.

The main ingredient was Tahoe Blue Vodka – which every bartender had to use.

“There was plenty of trial and error,” bartender Aaron Stein told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The whole idea was to go back to a retro theme with Cherry Coke. Then we added seasonal flavors.”

For the judges, of which this reporter was one, the cocktail was served in a mason jar with a lid and candy cane looking straw.

There is talk this drink dubbed Hugs and Fizzes will be on Coldwater’s menu soon.

The other drink judges raved about was Apples to Apples created by Erick Martinez at Riva Grill. In addition to the vodka, it had ginger rosemary syrup, cold pressed apple juice, fresh muddled apples, lemon squeeze and fresh shaved cinnamon.

It wasn’t too sweet and the ginger definitely came through, several judges said. And with it being apple season, it, too, stood out as a distinctly seasonal beverage. The apple and rosemary garnish made a great impression as well.

Other contestants came from McP’s, Heavenly, Lucky Beaver, LewMarNel’s, and Glazed and Confused Tahoe Donut. Each made a cocktail and a mocktail, with different judges for each category.

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# Calif. needs better weather prediction tools for water management

By Guy McCarthy, Union Democrat

Current weather forecasting tools are less than adequate for

managing California's most vital natural resource, state water officials said Tuesday.

People at the state Department of Water Resources are now working with researchers at NASA and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography to develop new technology to better forecast moisture-laden atmospheric river storms, like the ones that hammered the Mother Lode and the rest of the Central Sierra in January and February.

Current short-term forecasting for seven days out is 70 percent accurate, while 14-day forecasts are 7 percent accurate, Grant Davis, director of the state Department of Water Resources, said Tuesday.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Sandoval wants guidance on gun background-check law**

**By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

CARSON CITY — Gov. Brian Sandoval is seeking legal guidance into whether the state can implement the stalled background-check law for private gun sales and transfers that voters approved in 2016.

Sandoval spokeswoman Mari St. Martin said Tuesday the governor's office is asking Attorney General Adam Laxalt's office if Nevada can operate as a "dual point of contact state." That means two systems of background checks for firearm purchases: one for licensed dealers and another for private sales and transfers.

No evidence has emerged that background checks for private sales would have stopped Stephen Paddock, who didn't have a criminal record and purchased firearms in retail gun stores after passing background checks. Federal law doesn't require background checks for private gun sales.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Housing costs make Calif. the poorest state**

**By Matt Levin, San Francisco Chronicle**

A sign advertising apartments for rent is displayed in front of an apartment complex in San Francisco.

California leads the nation once again in a statistic no state wants to boast about. When the cost of living is factored in, the Golden State has the highest poverty rate in the country.

More than 20 percent of its residents struggle to make ends meet, according to recently released census figures. That's nearly 8 million people.

Unfortunately for Californians, this year's poverty numbers are not an aberration. The census began releasing state-by-state results for its "supplemental poverty measure" in 2011, in an attempt to improve upon the outdated and heavily criticized official poverty statistics.

**Read the whole story**

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# S. Lake Tahoe on path to limit number of VHRs

By Kathryn Reed

Before the end of the year, South Lake Tahoe will have a moratorium in place regarding vacation home rentals.

The council on Tuesday agreed to limit the number of VHRs as well as create density criteria. Council member Tom Davis recused himself because of his involvement in the industry.

While no actual vote was taken, the four gave direction to staff to come back with an ordinance that will dramatically change things.

Today there are 1,368 VHRs in the non-tourist core area. As of Dec. 8, the limit will be 1,400. The first reading of the new ordinance will be at the next regular meeting on Oct. 17, with the second reading scheduled for Nov. 7. The ordinance then takes effect 30 days later.

Quality of life for full-time residents was the main reason for these changes.

The new ordinance means no new permits will be given out if there is a VHR within 150 feet of the applicant. There are currently about 110 pending applications. They will have the first opportunity to fill the spots.

Ultimately, the density issue will actually bring the number of these short-term rentals to 1,288, according to city staff. This will be through attrition and could take a number of years.

According to City Manager Nancy Kerry's presentation to council on Oct. 3, the minimum distance standard would:

- Improve residents' quality life, health and well-being by reducing areas highly saturated by VHRs;
- Minimize impacts of VHRs among residents;
- Help restore community character;
- Reduce calls for service for police department personnel.

Most of the council members acknowledged they did not want to decimate the VHR industry, but at the same time they seek to bring some peace to residents who have been burdened by unruly guests who have little respect for their temporary neighbors.

Homeowners associations will not be subject to these rules, but instead may create their own regulations. For now, this pertains to the Tahoe Keys and Tahoe Tyrol. About 17 percent of Tahoe Keys homes are used as a short-term rental. Their major concerns were bear boxes and density.

In the new ordinance also expect these following changes/additions:

- Maximum occupancy will be two people per bedroom, plus two additional guests.
- Camping in a tent or RV will not be allowed at a VHR.
- Parking must be on a paved surface.
- Bear boxes will be mandatory by July 2018, with regulations based on square footage of the rental.
- Warnings for VHR owners will be eliminated.
- If an owner receives three violations within 24 months, the permit will be revoked.

- VHR owners who stay in their own dwelling must adhere to the VHR rules, though permits for parties and the like can be requested.

- Three people will be hired to boost the VHR compliance department to six. This will be paid for with an additional annual fee of another \$300 per property. (This was after Police Chief Brian Uhler admitted the temporary added enforcement last winter did not have much of an impact.)

One item to still be decided will be setting a minimum number of days people have to rent their place. This is to deter people from obtaining a permit with the sole purpose of keeping someone else from securing one.

It's also possible other changes could occur in the next two weeks, and that not all the council members will support the final ordinance.

A software program like Host Compliance will be on a future agenda for the council to decide if that or another platform is something the council wants to go forward with. The principal of the company made a **presentation earlier this fall**. The software is designed to ferret out scofflaws, plus Host Compliance in particular has other offerings such as a complaint hot line.

Thirty-five people spoke at the meeting Tuesday, with the views covering a wide spectrum. Some threatened taking the VHR issue to the ballot if constraints were not put into place, others spoke of the financial impact restrictions will have, some want the free to market dictate the number of VHRs, others want this to be a property rights issue, a few worry the tourist core area will be impacted with people displacing residents in a desire to have a VHR.

The new ordinance only pertains to units outside the tourist core, and only to full house rentals, not to those renting a room while they are on the premise.

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# **Nev. ground zero in gun background check fight**

**By Kurtis Lee, Los Angeles Times**

As law enforcement continues to gather details on how Stephen Paddock obtained the rifles he used in Sunday's mass shooting on the Las Vegas Strip, elected officials are using the incident to again call for stricter gun laws.

Nevada is no stranger to gun law reform efforts and the political battles that ensue.

Last year, voters in the state narrowly passed Question 1, an initiative that required most private buyers and sellers of guns to conduct a background check through a licensed dealer. Millions of dollars from national groups supporting and opposing the law poured into the state.

**Read the whole story**

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## **NDOT essentially rebuilding slope above Hwy. 50**



Men in climbing harnesses secure a wire mesh to the hillside above Highway 50 near Logan Shoals. Photo/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

LOGAN SHOALS – While it looks like NDOT is building a climbing wall along Highway 50 on the South Shore, the reality is workers are attempting to stop Mother Nature.

Boulders, some the size of trucks, repeatedly tumbled down last winter onto the road. No cars were hit; no one was injured. The highway – the main artery from the South Shore to Carson City as well as the fastest route to Kings Beach and Incline Village – was closed for weeks, then reduced to one-lane in each direction as it is now.

While the work will not be done this construction season, the plan is to have all the lanes open before winter. Crews are expected to complete the project next year. As long as

temperatures don't get too cold, work will continue this month.

By the time it's finished, the goal is the average motorist won't know that the hillside has essentially been rebuilt. Concrete will be contoured to look like natural Sierra granite boulders. "Cracks" will be added to resemble authentic fissures. The stain will also be slightly varied to complement Mother Nature.

Touching a sample, it feels a bit like granite and not like typical concrete. It looks real as well.

The contractor had to pour 4-inch and 12-inch deep samples, as well as provide a test of the finished product for Nevada Department of Transportation officials.

"The design is considered to be a permanent fix. Drainage features let the water in if there is any," Shawn Paterson, designer with NDOT, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



A section of the hillside with the 4-inch concrete spray and limited contouring. Photo/Kathryn Reed

There will be multiple layers of reinforcement applied to the hill.

John Angel, resident engineer with NDOT, said the only thing that could pose a problem is road salts because “that degrades concrete.” Still, the state officials are confident the materials will last essentially forever unless there is a catastrophic event like a major earthquake – then all bets are off.

It’s water that brought down the gargantuan boulders – specifically the unusual amount of rain the basin received last winter.

Geo-textile fabric has been laid on the slope from the top to the bottom. Corrugations on the inside will help push the

water away. It is designed not to freeze.

PVC pipe is attached at the bottom to let the accumulated water drain.

John Bradshaw, an NDOT designer, explained that the rain washes away the dirt that is the natural interlocking mechanism between the rocks. This makes for a precarious situation, where the stability of neighboring rocks is questionable.

With the assistance of a geotechnical engineer, NDOT studied the whole area. Soil nailing is the solution that the department settled on. This same technology has been used on Highway 28 where the bike trail in Incline Village is being built.

At the steepest, the crews go up 70 feet to the end of NDOT's right-of-way. The length is more than 1,300 feet. Above their responsibility the land is either private or owned by the U.S. Forest Service.



The drill used to bore 20-foot holes into the hillside that will be filled with concrete as a stabilizer. Photo/Kathryn Reed

To essentially rebuild the slope requires men to be in climbing harnesses eight hours a day. They dangle above the asphalt grouting the holes.

Six-inch-wide holes have been drilled 20-feet-deep into what was described as good soil, and granite so it will be stable. They are spaced 5 feet apart in height and width in a grid pattern. They are filled to become the anchors. They are encapsulated in cement grout, with triple corrosion protection.

Wire mesh is draped over the surface to help hold any loose rocks. It's then connected to the steel rods.

Shotcrete has already been blown onto a section on the west end of the construction site. This is the 4-inch layer. Anchors protrude from this layer of concrete. On top another 12-inches of shotcrete will be sprayed on. This is similar to what took place on Cave Rock recently when NDOT contractors secured that rock structure.

By next summer NDOT hopes it will be hard to tell crews were ever out there.

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## **Douglas County employees accused of theft**

**By Lake Tahoe News**

Douglas County officials are not being very forthcoming with information about employees stealing from the public works department even though they admit they were first made aware of the thefts in March.

The Nevada Division of Investigation and Douglas County District Attorney's Office have been investigating the thefts since they were first reported more than six months ago.

"The criminal investigation will be made available once the investigation is completed and the matter is reviewed for prosecution," the county said in a press release.

The investigations involve "allegations of thefts of tires and other possible improprieties within the public works department."

County spokeswoman Melissa Blosser would not tell *Lake Tahoe News* if anyone has been placed on leave, removed from the department or fired. She also wouldn't say how long people had been stealing, how many people were involved, or the value of what was taken.

For the past several months the county said it has conducted an internal audit and inventory of purchased tires, strengthened internal financial controls to provide additional security, retained an accounting firm to conduct a complete inventory of tires and other supplies used in the operations and maintenance of county vehicles and to assist in determining the amount of the frauds committed against the county, which also should identify ways to prevent similar types of fraud in the future.

The county says it plans to use the IT department to better track inventory.

The county plans to change its policies when it comes to the public and staff being able to report suspected fraud. With the county only talking through press releases, it is not known what the policy was before or what it will be in the future. It is in the process of revamping the Whistleblower Protection Program.

All staff will be given ethics training as well.