

Sandoval works to get Obamacare throughout Nev.

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval said Tuesday that the state is “diligently working” to ensure that 14 rural Nevada counties will have health insurance coverage options through the state-based exchange in 2018.

In June, that state got word that no carriers will provide coverage to 14 Nevada counties through the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange, which provides health insurance through the federal Affordable Care Act.

Those carriers cited uncertainties in the market as reasons to forgo the Nevada counties next year.

Read the whole story

Bay Area money gobbling up Truckee properties

Publisher's note: *This is one in a series of stories about affordable housing in the Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. All articles may be accessed via the home page under Special Projects, 2017 Affordable Housing.*

By Linda Fine Conaboy

TRUCKEE – To live in Truckee and surrounding areas requires a great deal of money; money that seems to be in good supply

especially if you've recently sold or are contemplating selling property in the Bay Area, where many of the buyers are cashing out and seeking more reasonable housing options in the Sierra.

Speakers representing various segments of Truckee's wild real estate market comprised the panel of presenters at the Aug. 8 Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce breakfast. They discussed the peculiarities their unique market presents including inventory, long- and short-term rentals, real estate trends and their impacts on the local economy and the community.



“If you make less than \$100,000 a year, housing is an issue around Lake Tahoe and Truckee.” –

Katie Rice, senior loan officer at Guild Mortgage

The cost of housing took up big slices of air time as well it should since the median price of a home in the area is now \$585,000, compared to \$549,000 in 2016.

Affordable housing issues are numerous, said Matt Hansen, owner/broker of Tahoe Truckee Homes and the panel's moderator.

Sam Drury, president of the Tahoe Sierra Board of Realtors and broker/owner of Padden Properties, agreed and noted Truckee

has more full-time residents now than Lake Tahoe, although this hasn't always been the case. The way Drury sees it, Truckee has become a far more stable area, garnering the lion's share of buyers who mostly hail from the Bay Area.

"If you're a second-home buyer and flush with cash, you really don't worry about price," he said. "Tahoe is Fantasy Land for Californians. Fifty percent of my deals last year were cash. It's a very different world up here."

He added that as far as he can see, price is not an object to these consumers. "People are flush. That's a really odd thing. They can spend, and want to spend [sometimes] more than \$3 million. These customers are the life blood of our community. It's the way it is, there's nothing else I can say."

But this scenario can leave the local who's looking for a reasonably priced family home out of the running.

A second-home owner purchasing a house priced at about \$527,000 can expect an average monthly payment of \$2,700, said Katie Rice, senior loan officer at Guild Mortgage. "Locals can't afford this, and with so much cash floating around, sellers usually will take the cash offer. It's a struggle, but cash offers are easier."



Houses are not affordable for the average worker in Truckee. Photos/Linda Fine Conaboy

Starter homes in Truckee remain solidly within the \$400,000 to \$500,000 range, causing some to look for housing in Reno and elsewhere. "But there's a big affordable housing problem in Reno too," Rice said.

Even if people can find an affordable home in Truckee, other expenses can ruin monthly budgets, especially when you consider that many pay up to \$1,000 in childcare costs, not to mention food, utilities and other monthly essentials.

And the picture becomes even more dismal as Rice paints a grim scenario describing costs that can be incurred on a \$407,000 "starter home," which includes a 20 percent down payment. She said the base monthly payment pencils at \$1,600, but with the addition of taxes, insurance and other fees the final monthly figure comes in at \$2,124.

"No one's doubting we have a problem here," declared Jim Winterberger, partner and president at Tahoe Getaways. "But business is good and housing prices are high here because this is a cool place to be."

Winterberger added that solutions to the dilemma need to include housing pockets such as Martis Camp, Shafer's Mill and Northstar.

"As the long-term rental pool shrinks, it's forcing people out of the market—this is affecting Truckee as a community." He added, "As an investor, you need to put at least 50 percent down and you need a long-term tenant. If not, it can be a challenge."

Chiming in, Drury alluded to the number of unknowns yet to be discovered. "The Bay Area is an economic engine running the problem and it's on full throttle now; but there it costs a ton to buy a house. The excess money might be being sucked up by the high cost of living. Californians need to be reminded about how wonderful we are," he laughed.

An audience member asked why there are so few multi-family dwellings in the region. The answer from the panel: it's expensive and hard to get financing and insurance.

"We're all dealing with really tight margins," Rice said. "Even if investors have emotional ties to Truckee, they still have to make money."

In addition, Rice added, "We need to figure out how to keep our work force here. People in our community are not connecting the dots about housing. If someone has to commute from Grass Valley or even Fernley, you can reach a point of diminishing returns."

"I don't think there's one solution, it will take everyone working together to solve this. If you make less than \$100,000 a year, housing is an issue around Lake Tahoe and Truckee."

Ashley Cooper, Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation communications and grant manager was a visitor at this meeting instead of a presenter as she has been in the past. TTCF helped create the Mountain Housing Council.

“Everyone’s talking together,” Cooper said. “We’re trying to build awareness [of this housing situation]. People care about other people.”

She invited guests to participate and send her their thoughts and ideas. “We need you and your solutions,” she said.

Sage grouse conservation changes praised, provoke alarm

By Mead Gruver and Matthew Brown, AP

The Trump administration has opened the door to industry-friendly changes to a sweeping plan imposed by his predecessor to protect a ground-dwelling bird across vast areas of the West.

Wildlife advocates warn that the proposed changes would undercut a hard-won struggle to protect the greater sage grouse.

Representatives of the ranching and energy industries cheered the policy shift as needed to give states flexibility.

States affected by the conservation plan are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Read the whole story

Anthem pulling out of Nevada health exchange

By Reuters

U.S. health insurer Anthem Inc. said on Monday it will no longer offer Obamacare plans in Nevada's state exchange and will stop offering the plans in nearly half of Georgia's counties next year.

The moves come after Republican senators last month failed to repeal and replace Obamacare, former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare reform law, creating uncertainty over how the program providing health benefits to 20 million Americans will be funded and managed in 2018.

Hundreds of U.S. counties are at risk of losing access to private health coverage in 2018 as insurers consider pulling out of those markets in the coming months.

Read the whole story

KMS deal collapses; property

going back on market



The future of the former Kingsbury Middle School is still a mystery. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – The vote and tone of Tuesday's Douglas County School District board meeting proved the electeds are tired of dealing with Patrick Taylor.

Taylor is the Cave Rock resident who a year ago entered into an agreement to buy the shuttered Kingsbury Middle School property. He has been given multiple extensions throughout the process.

On Aug. 8 the board unanimously said no more extensions would be granted. The board will seek a new appraisal on the 22-plus acre site that has 36,000-square-feet of space. It will then be put back on the market.

The original asking price was \$4 million when the board in January 2012 put it on the market. In September 2015 the price

was lowered to \$3.125 million by averaging the two appraisals.

It's anyone's guess what the new appraisal will come in at.

Whoever buys it will have to contend with zoning issues and potentially irate neighbors. The public has been slow to show up at meetings to voice their concerns. While the room was packed Tuesday afternoon, only three people spoke.

Despite the decision, Taylor could submit another offer.

The board's issue with him was the delays. They didn't see what good it would do to keep extending an offer without getting anything in return. Taylor was adamant in telling the board, "There is no way in the world I would extend it to just Sept. 17 and I won't put up more money."

His \$55,000 deposit is now the district's to do with what it wants. (The district is paying about \$5,000 a month for the upkeep of the site, which includes utilities.)

Asked after the meeting if he had a Plan B, Taylor told *Lake Tahoe News*, "Nah, I'm done with them."

Whether that was said in anger or if he'll change his mind remains to be seen.

The school was closed in 2008 because of declining enrollment.

It was pointed out by a member of the public that Taylor's plan to build affordable housing could have created a scenario where the remaining two DCSD schools at the lake would be overcrowded if his plans came to fruition and families filled those residences.

Will Congress fix wildfire funding?

By Rebecca Worby, High Country News

The West is in the midst of another intense wildfire season.

With President Donald Trump proposing to cut the U.S. Forest Service's firefighting budget by nearly \$300 million, the question of how to manage and fund wildfire suppression on public lands has again reared its head.

Over the past decade, as wildfire season has lengthened and fires have grown more severe, firefighting has claimed more and more of the Forest Service's funds, accounting for 56 percent of its overall budget in 2016. Conservatives in Congress have long tried to push legislation that, though ostensibly geared toward wildfire risk reduction, would benefit the timber industry. And with a Republican majority and an administration intent on rolling back environmental review processes, such legislation may gain more traction this time around.

[Read the whole story](#)

STR bear box loan program extended

By Kathryn Reed

The zero interest loan program for bear boxes in South Tahoe Refuse's service area has been so successful that it has been

extended.

The South Lake Tahoe Waste Management Authority board last week agreed to continue the program that is less than a year old.

“It’s one of the best things for long-term sustainability and reducing our animal in trash issues,” Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*. She is South Lake Tahoe’s rep on the board. Other board members are Douglas County Commissioner Nancy McDermid and El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel.

In the pilot program 36 people have received bear boxes and another 39 are approved. Seventy-five boxes are what was expected in the pilot program. The JPA had budgeted \$75,000 for the initial program.

At the Aug. 4 meeting the board agreed to allocate \$300,000 to keep the program alive.

“It was determined that the loan repayments would cycle back into the restricted funds that are allocated for the loans,” David explained.

STR has another 150 households ready to go. They applied for the program in the hopes it would be extended.

According to STR, it’s been a mix of locals, second homeowners and vacation rental owners who have participated.

One issue with the boxes is the workers don’t know if there is actually garbage in the bins.

“Although collection workers are required to stop and check every box, it’s still less time consuming and more sanitary than cleaning up after an incident,” Jeanette Tillman with STR told *Lake Tahoe News*. “One of the dynamics of the program includes working with STR to ensure the box placement is collection friendly, meaning, if placed properly, accessibility issues should be kept to a minimum even during

the winter months.”

Pro athletes won't pay income tax in Nevada

By Adam Candee, Las Vegas Sun

The arrival of the Vegas Golden Knights this year and the Raiders in three years will excite local sports fans, but the players might feel equally giddy about the prospect of calling Nevada home.

As one of seven states that does not tax personal income, Nevada offers an attractive bonus for the hockey and football players.

The Raiders in particular will see a major change in tax liability – California imposes a 13.3 percent income tax on earnings over \$1 million, and 24 players on the team's roster will make at least that much this season. Even rookies making the NFL minimum of \$465,000 face a state tax rate of at least 10.3 percent.

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Defunct ski areas: How to

heal their wounds?



There used to be a ski resort at Echo Summit. Photo/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

By Lisa M. Krieger, Bay Area News Group

The rope tow is long gone. The parking lot is empty. Instead of the bustling chatter of a happy crowd of skiers, there's just silence.

But the landscape of the abandoned Powder Bowl ski area still bears witness to its past, more than two decades after its closing.

Throughout the Sierra there are dozens of abandoned resorts that hark back to a different era, when snow was plentiful and skiing a favorite pastime. With increased competition from bigger resorts and a decline in skiers, many have closed and the scars they have left behind may have dramatic impact on our watershed.

Read the whole story

Nature's bouquet at Lake Winnemucca



Purple is the dominant color on the way to Round Top.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

A kaleidoscope of colors dances across the landscape in the gentle breeze.

The record-setting snowfall from winter 2016-17 is still being felt – or at last seen. The flowers are late, but they were worth waiting for. If you think you've seen vibrant, healthy lupine, you haven't seen anything until you go to Winnemucca Lake.



Flowers of all colors are spread across the trail.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

An explosion of wildflowers is erupting in the High Sierra – about one month later than normal. And they appear to be at their peak.

The splash of deep purple, mixed with the lavender of the wild iris, interspersed with the vibrant red Indian paintbrush, the dainty yellow daisy-like flowers, and the white Queen Anne's lace are like a bouquet ready to be picked. Instead, the hikers are capturing memories with photographs.

Some are close to the ground; others a few feet high. Some are in isolated patches; others appear to be a field of flowers.



Wild iris

While locals know better than to do this hike on a weekend day, there appeared to be more Tahoe-ites on the trail Aug. 6 than out-of-towners. Yes, it was a bit of a freeway, but the joy this wondrous outing brought all of us made it more of a celebration of sorts. We were all happy to be sharing in the party Mother Nature was throwing.



Reflections of Round Top at Winnemucca Lake. Photo/Kathryn Reed

At about 5 miles round trip, this is a relatively easy hike. The only thing that might set someone back is that it starts at 8,500 feet. Elevation gain is about 500 feet.

A couple patches of snow still cross the trail. The only remarkable thing about it is how late in the season this is. Water on the trail is not an issue.



Beauty is everywhere on this
hike out of Carson Pass.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Sitting at Winnemucca Lake looking up at Round Top (10,381 feet) plenty of snow dots the rocky landscape.

Thundering water can be heard rushing on the far side of the lake. Waterfalls not normally seen this time of year are tumbling down the rock into the lake. Some appear to be roaring beneath the snow.



Wildflowers are at their peak.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

An ice shelf looks like something out of a winter landscape that doesn't belong in the Carson Pass – especially in August.

This raw, ruggedness is a reminder of the many personalities of Ma Nature. This flashback to winter makes me wonder if the next one is closer than I want to admit.



Lupine with Caples Lake in the distance. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Just past the bug station in Meyers, go left onto Highway 89. At the T-intersection, go right onto Highway 88. At the top of Carson Pass is parking to the left. Cost is \$5.