

5% pay cut being considered for California electeds

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

One week after Gov. Jerry Brown proposed slicing state workers' pay by 5 percent, the Democratic governor and legislators find themselves targeted for a "share the pain" salary cut.

Members of California's Citizens Compensation Commission said Monday that a pay-cut proposal for statewide officeholders will be on the table when the panel meets May 31.

Commissioner John Stites II said he supports a 5 percent cut for elected officeholders, from the governor to lawmakers.

"I definitely think they should take the same hit – at least," Stites said. "Whatever happens to the people who work for you, whatever conditions they live under, it's incumbent upon you to live under those same conditions."

Brown projects a \$15.7 billion budget shortfall for the fiscal year that begins July 1, and has proposed to bridge the gap with tax increases and program cuts, including a shift to a 38-hour, four-day workweek for state workers.

When he unveiled his revised proposal last week, Brown said his administration "would do more than what we ask state employees to do," suggesting he and others would voluntarily take pay cuts.

Read the whole story

Topaz Fire 100% contained

Cooler weather helped fire crews completely contain the Topaz Ranch Estates Fire, that consumed 7,500 acres south of Gardnerville.

The fire will be monitored over the next few days to ensure that the fire perimeter remains extinguished. Smoke may be visible from the fire area, as islands of green fuels may continue to burn out.

No injuries have been reported.

The cost for fighting the fire to date is estimated to be \$3.4 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

California primary influences anti-Obama ad buy in Nevada

By Anjeanette Damon, Las Vegas Sun

Crossroads GPS, a conservative group co-founded by Republican strategist Karl Rove, has launched an expensive ad campaign in Nevada targeting President Barack Obama.

But there's a noticeable gap in the ad buy.

Crossroads GPS is dark in Washoe County, Nevada's pivotal swing county that could be the national turning point for the presidential election.

Why not go after Obama in the county that could determine his

future in the White House?

Crossroads GPS refuses to shed light on the matter. Spokesman Nate Hodson said the group declines to talk about its specific strategy in placing ad buys.

But the answer could very well rest on the organization's strong desire to keep its donors in the shadows.

Read the whole story

Beating victim far from out of the woods; no arrests

By Kathryn Reed

"Right now we just hope he does not stop breathing."

If he does, it means Derek Penaranda will likely have died.

Penaranda's parents are hoping and praying their son will survive the beating he sustained in a South Lake Tahoe bar last weekend. Today he is clinging to life in a coma at Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Penaranda, who is called Zippy by everyone who knows him, was in town to celebrate his 30th birthday with family and friends. They had rented a place in the Tahoe Keys.



Derek "Zippy"
Penaranda and Katie
Musselwhite planned to
get married one day.
Photo/Provided

Before two taxis took the group of friends to Mo's Place, the gang had spent part of last Saturday kayaking in the canals of the Keys, with some going out to the lake.

Because Penaranda was born on his parents' anniversary, they have seldom celebrated it – instead deferring to their son. This year was different. Both occasions were being celebrated in Lake Tahoe.

That celebration took a tragic turn when a phone call came in the early hours of May 20 telling Debbie and Wayne Penaranda to get to Barton Memorial Hospital.

What sticks with Wayne Penaranda is overhearing someone in the emergency room say how when his son was turned over on the floor of the bar he was blue.

"At that time I expected the worst possible outcome primarily on what I know about those types of injuries ... when you are deprived of oxygen," Penaranda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He said he doesn't know the particulars that resulted in his son being punched unconscious as well as the owner of the bar, Mo Patel.

No one at Mo's would talk to *Lake Tahoe News* on May 25, but said Patel was expected in this weekend.

South Tahoe police are also not releasing details of the fight or the investigation.

What Penaranda said he was told is no one was allowed to approach his son as he laid on the floor of the bar not breathing. It was first responders who got him breathing again.

At Renown a cat scan showed Zippy's vertebrae and spinal cord were intact, and that his skull was not fractured. But there was swelling and bleeding in the brain.

"He had numerous contusions on his chest and back where he was kicked and stomped," Penaranda said of his son. "His heart had stopped."

An EEG showed brain activity.

On Tuesday it was time for an MRI.

"The MRI showed extensive cerebral cortex damage," Penaranda said.

The Penarandas returned home to Ripon, in the San Joaquin Valley, with only two of their three sons. They are back in Reno this weekend to be with Zippy. Penaranda said it's been a constant flow of people to the hospital. The people in the small agriculture town have been showing their support for the family, including setting up a Facebook page and arranging for a barbecue to honor Zippy on Sunday. (That will be at noon at Mistlin Sports Park, Ripon.)

Zippy has been living with his longtime girlfriend Katie Musselwhite. The Penarandas expected they'd be married one day and provide them with grandchildren. Zippy works for California Living and Energy in Ceres.

For now, though, his job is to fight for his life.

“Medically, the next phase is for them to stabilize him. Our hope is now he can breath with minimal help from the resuscitation machine and apparatus,” Penaranda said with hope. “As soon as he is healthy enough, then a long-term care facility, then hopefully he regains consciousness and then some form of rehabilitation.”

If Zippy survives this ordeal, it will be a long road to recovery, and perhaps never to the life he knew.

Bryan Stowe, who was 41 when he was attacked in March 2011 at Dodger game, took months to open his eyes. A website providing updates on Stowe, says, “Bottom line and without sugarcoating anything, Bryan is far from the old Bryan and each day is a struggle.”

That beating had 14 detectives on the case in Los Angeles.

South Lake Tahoe Police Department can count its detectives on one hand.

Significant differences, though, are South Tahoe police have the advantage of video (which is not being released to the media) and witnesses.

“We are interviewing everyone who was there, reviewing reports, and doing follow-up interviews as needed,” Lt. David Stevenson told *Lake Tahoe News* on May 25.

A taser was used that night, but not by officers, Stevenson said. “It went off, but it did not hit anybody,” he said.

As of Friday, no one had been arrested. It’s likely attempted murder charges will be filed against at least one person. If Zippy dies, then manslaughter is the presumptive charge.

Placer County accused of violating deputy's employment rights

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Attorneys representing the Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association have filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging the county violated military employment rights.

The suit alleges that following an 18-month tour of duty, Army Stg. Kevin Brady returned to his position as a deputy sheriff for the county.

"Instead of rewarding his service to his country, the county was holding him back from being eligible to apply for specialty assignments and promotions in violation of federal law," according to a press release from the sheriffs' association. The suit was filed by Attorney B.J. Pierce of the Mastagni Law Firm.

The county did not have an immediate comment on the matter.

Bomb squad deactivates grenade found on South Shore

A suspicious device found on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe ended up being a grenade.

Members of El Dorado County Sheriff's Department's Explosive Ordinance Detail used an X-ray device to determine the item that was located inside a black bag near the end of Sierra Boulevard and Barbara Avenue was live.

"They used a disruptor to render the device safe," Deputy Damian Frisby told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's a small charge that shoots a projectile into the device that basically blows it apart so it doesn't cause explosion."

No one had to be evacuated during the May 25 late afternoon incident. Nearby residents were told to stay away from doors and windows as the device was deactivated.

Frisby said investigators are looking into who placed the grenade near where Caltrans dumps snow each winter. He does not know if the person who notified authorities may have had anything to do with the incident.

— Kathryn Reed

85% containment in Topaz Fire

The Topaz Ranch Estates Fire has not grown beyond the 7,500 acres.

Containment is at 85 percent, with full containment expected May 27.

The fire started May 22 when a residential control burn had not been properly extinguished. Officials also said the resident did not have the proper permits for the fire.

Nineteen structures have burned to the ground, includes two houses.

Helicopters, cooler weather and precipitation on Friday helped firefighters gain on the blaze.

The fire remains on the mountain side, west of Smith Valley residences and northwest of Wellington. The fire is about three-quarters of a mile west of Taylor Hill and a mile north of Highway 208.

No injuries have been reported. The cost for fighting the fire to date is estimated to be \$2.5 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Survey: Nevada lawmakers favor government transparency

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Sixty state lawmakers and legislative candidates who responded to a survey on government transparency largely favor new laws requiring the Legislature to follow the Open Meeting Law and mandating expanded reporting of spending on legislators by lobbyists.

The survey, sponsored by the Nevada Policy Research Institute and the Nevada Press Association, also saw broad support for imposing a 72-hour time frame so the public can read bills before they go to a floor vote, subjecting local government negotiations with public employee unions to the state Open Meeting Law and assessing penalties for government officials who violate Nevada's public records laws.

The survey was sent to 153 candidates and eight state Senators who are not up for re-election this year. Forty-one Republicans, 14 Democrats and five minor party candidates responded.

This survey is intended to give the voters a chance to find out where candidates stand on transparency issues including public records, open meetings and campaign finance reforms.

"I think it ought to be a very important issue for voters," said Barry Smith, executive director of the press association. "That's why we do this; so that they know who has it on their priority list."

Advocates of increased transparency in government say the responses suggest that further progress can be made on the issues in the 2013 session of the Nevada Legislature.

"We've been able to move forward with Open Meeting Law, Open Records Law; the campaign finance does show some improvement," Smith said. "That's another thing these surveys showed – there is quite a bit of work to do and there is quite a bit of work the Legislature can do."

Geoffrey Lawrence, deputy policy director at NPRI, said at least 50 of the 60 responses were either in favor of or leaning in favor of the proposals, suggesting there is a good chance for further progress for increased government transparency in the upcoming session.

The new requirements for campaign contribution and expense

reports adopted in the 2011 session were part of the 2010 survey, suggesting the effort is having some influence, he said.

“A lot of these other ideas were embodied into bills; they just never passed the Legislature,” Lawrence said. “So hopefully that will happen this time.”

The survey comes just as Republican Assembly caucus leader Pat Hickey, R-Reno, announced several transparency reforms he will seek in the 2013 session. Hickey responded to the survey, indicating support for the various proposals with a “lean yes” on applying the Open Meeting Law to the Legislature. He indicated some flexibility may be required for the proposal, given the 120-day time limit the Legislature has to finish its business.

While most survey responses were supportive without qualification, there were also a few “maybes” and some opposition to the proposals.

Former state Sen. Sheila Leslie, a Democrat who resigned her seat in mid-term to run for the Senate 15 seat now held by Republican Greg Brower, did not favor subjecting collective bargaining negotiations to public scrutiny.

“I don’t think inviting TV cameras into negotiations with public employee unions is in the best interest of government,” she said. “There needs to be more transparency and communication but making everything subject to the Open Meeting Law is not necessarily good government. This is one of those instances.”

Leslie was not alone in expressing concerns about the proposal.

Reno Republican Assembly 31 candidate David Espinosa said: “Negotiations, by their nature, are sensitive matters that an open meeting inclusion would transform into an entrenchment of

sides, and an opportunity for grandstanding and demagoguery. I would instead support all efforts to openly disclose the starting positions of both sides of the negotiation, and the final position of each of the representatives of the local government.”

Lawrence said the issue is more problematic for some candidates and elected officials because of the support they get from public sector labor unions, which generally oppose such proposals.

Others are more bipartisan in nature, such as the proposal to require reporting of spending by lobbyists on lawmakers all year round and not just during each legislative session.

Leslie sponsored the bill in 2011 that would have required lobbyists to report all spending on lawmakers, not just spending during a legislative session. Senate Bill 206 passed the Senate unanimously but died in an Assembly committee without a vote.

Smith said the goal is to keep moving forward with incremental successes.

“To me it should be obvious that open government is a bipartisan kind of thing that people can agree on that that’s what we want,” he said. “There’s not always agreement on exactly how you get there. But as long as people think it’s important and are willing to work on it, then we will move forward with some of these things.”

Study: Nevadans more likely to die by gun than in traffic accident

By KNTV-2

A study says the number of people killed in Nevada by guns outpaced those who died in traffic accidents in 2009.

The study released Tuesday by the Washington, D.C.-based Violence Policy Center says Nevada is one of 10 states where guns deaths were greater than traffic deaths. The other states are Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Oregon, Utah, Virginia and Washington.

In Nevada, 406 gun deaths were reported in 2009, compared with 255 people who died in motor vehicle accidents.

Nationally, there were 31,236 firearm deaths and 36,361 motor vehicle deaths in 2009.

The report cites data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A Violence Policy Center state-by-state analysis of government data comparing firearm deaths and motor vehicle deaths shows that gun deaths outpaced motor vehicle deaths in 10 states in 2009, the most recent year for which state level data is available. The 10 states which experienced more firearm deaths than motor vehicle deaths in 2009 are: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, and Washington (see alphabetical listing of states with mortality figures below). Nationally, there were 31,236 firearm deaths in 2009 and 36,361 motor vehicle deaths according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and

Control.

Read the whole story

GPS units on South Tahoe snowplows recalibrated

By Kathryn Reed

Representatives from the company that installed the GPS units on the snowplows in South Lake Tahoe were in town this month to make sure all of the equipment is in place for when the snow really flies again.

The devices had to be remounted from where they were originally located for better reception.



South Lake
Tahoe
residents
should be able
track plow
drivers next
winter via
GPS. Photo/LTN
file

Some areas in town just don't get good reception – much like cell phones. However, there were times when the plows transmitted information saying they were in Kansas. That glitch has been resolved, according to city officials.

The GPS is designed to be good for the public and good for street crews.

"The public will be able to see what has been plowed and what hasn't been," Stan Sherer, community development director, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "All the streets are color coded so we can determine which is the best route to work."

This data will be available on the city's website. And Sherer promises it will be easy to use.

Another issue still not completely resolved is who is supposed to shovel which sidewalk or when there isn't a sidewalk along Highway 50. More sidewalks will be put in this summer as Caltrans continues with its water quality project along the highway.

South Lake Tahoe and Caltrans rules conflict with one another. The city ordinance says the owner of property or the agency with the right-of-way where the sidewalk sits must keep it clear.

Caltrans rules say, "The degree and type of maintenance for each highway, or portion thereof, shall be determined in the discretion of the authorities charged with maintenance thereof, taking into consideration traffic requirements and monies available thereof."

Caltrans' legal department told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The local ordinance conflicts with statutory law, noted above, granting the state the exclusive right to maintain and control its rights of way. Principles of sovereign immunity, which are grounded in the California state Constitution, prohibit enforcement of the ordinance against the State because it

directly conflicts with state's authority to control and maintain its own property."