

Robber strikes BofA in South Lake Tahoe

Moments after the Bank of America in South Lake Tahoe opened Monday morning it was robbed.



A suspect entered the branch at 3344 Lake Tahoe Blvd. just after 9am April 16 and demanded cash from a teller. No weapon was seen.

Officers are not releasing how much money the suspect got away with.

The suspect is described as a white male, about 5-foot-11, medium build, between 50- and 60-years-old, and clean shaven.

If anyone has information, call (530) 542.6100.

Vonn faces \$1.7 mil. in delinquent federal taxes

By USA Today

World Cup and Olympic champion skier, owes more than \$1.7 million in delinquent federal taxes, according to a *Detroit News* report.

Vonn, who has several high-profile sponsors including Red

Bull, Under Armour, Procter and Gamble and Rolex among others, has been going through a divorce from Thomas Vonn, who also served as her coach.

The *Detroit News*, citing public records, reported that the IRS filed a \$1,705,437 tax lien against Lindsey and Thomas Vonn on April 2 in Nevada.

In an email, Vonn told the News that she's going to pay up. "It is no secret that my last year off the mountain has been filled with many personal challenges. This matter was only recently brought to my attention, and I took immediate and deliberate steps to remedy the situation."

Read the whole story

Ballots full of questions for June primary voters

California and Nevada have primary elections in June. Golden State voters will go to the polls June 5 and Silver State voters on June 12.



A few local issues are on the ballots, with more to be determined Nov. 6.

The date to register to vote looms and is different in each county.

Because of redistricting, El Dorado County is no longer in the

4th and 10th Assembly Districts. Part of the county is now in the 5th and 6th Assembly Districts, of which there will be an election for both seats.

Voters will also be asked to select a Republican candidate for president, U.S. Senator, congressman and state senator.

At the local level on the June ballot in El Dorado County are:

- Three vying for Superior Court judge – Joseph Hoffman, Curt Stracener and Steve Valentine.
- County supervisor District 1 candidates are John Knight and Ron Mikulaco.
- County supervisor District 2 candidates are Ray Nutting and George Turnboo.
- County supervisor District 3 candidates are Allen Amaro, Richard Barb, A.L. Hamilton, Cathy Nerwinski, Sue Taylor and Brian Veerkamp.
- Measure B to change the business license fees in South Lake Tahoe.

In Placer County, many of the state and federal office openings are the same, though some of the districts are different.

At the local level on the June ballot in Placer County are:

- County supervisor District 3 candidates are Jim Holmes and Robert Grigas.
- County supervisor District 4 candidates are Kirk Uhler and Pam Tobin.
- County supervisor District 5 candidates are Jennifer Montgomery, Mark Wright, Jerry Johnson, Richard Johnson, and Gary Johnson.

- Measure F continues the transient occupancy tax in North Lake Tahoe to fund tourism and recreation specific initiatives.

Some of the Douglas County issues in June:

- Tahoe Justice of the Peace Richard Glasson faces no opposition.
- Running for county commission District 5 seat are Dianne Humble, Michael Olson and Barry Penzel.
- School board member Cindy Trigg is running unopposed.
- Four people are running for Assembly District 39: Kelly Kite, Gary Schmidt, David Schumann and Jim Wheeler.

Nevada voters will also be asked to elect a U.S. senator.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Garbage bills going up for South Shore customers

By Kathryn Reed

Garbage rates are expected to go up throughout the South Shore starting May 1.

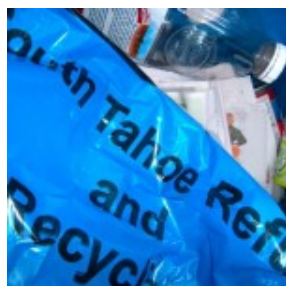
The joint powers authority that oversees waste matters agreed to recommend the rate increase earlier this month. Now the three jurisdictions – South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, and Douglas County – need to approve the hike.

Fees are slated to go up 4.48 percent in El Dorado County, and

4.97 percent in South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County. For residential customers this equates to a monthly increase of \$1.20 in El Dorado County, \$1.15 in South Lake Tahoe and 77 cents in Douglas County. This means monthly rates become \$27.97 in El Dorado County, \$24.33 in South Lake Tahoe, and \$16.33 in Douglas.

South Tahoe and El Dorado have unlimited service and Douglas has one 32-gallon can for those monthly rates.

The city and El Dorado County elected officials are expected to vote on the matter May 1, with the increase taking effect immediately. Douglas County officials did not respond to a request to find out when the vote would be taken nor is any information on the website.



Recyclables don't have much of a return in terms of cash, but they do keep garbage out of landfills.

Photo/LTN

Through South Tahoe Refuse company's franchise agreements with the three jurisdictions it is allowed to ask for a rate increase every three years. Normally it comes on Jan. 1. But last year the company with the JPA, which has an official from

each of the jurisdictions, worked out a process to streamline the process.

“What we tried to do was standardize the rate application so all three jurisdictions are on the same level,” explained Gerri Silva, director of Environmental Management for El Dorado County. “We tried to go through and define what is a good index. Some of us used COLAs, some used CPI.”

With this and future rate increase proposals the Garbage and Trash Index will be used to help determine rates.

The idea is this method will eliminate spikes.

Jeff Tillman, president of the South Lake Tahoe-based refuse company, said all of his costs are going up – landfill charges, fuel, insurance, everything – so the increase is needed.

STR employees have gone without a raise for four years, the pension has been cut, and less equipment is being used.

“We are trying to make it work,” Tillman said, acknowledging no one likes any bill to go up.

While STR is recycling 66 percent of the garbage it collects – exceeding the state mandate – there is little money to recover from those products. What does come in is not profit; it goes into the base rate calculations.

Things beyond STR’s control have diminished its income. The homeowners who did not rebuild after the Angora Fire no longer pay a garbage bill.

Foreclosed properties also don’t have an STR bill.

“When the properties were demolished at Stateline that was a huge chunk,” Tillman told *Lake Tahoe News*.

When something gets built at “the hole” then STR will have

several more clients to bill.

Commercial service is based mostly on how many times the dumpster is emptied. With so few people in town this winter, not much garbage was produced, so bills were light for those property owners – which in turn means revenue is down for STR.

Trying to find a measure for how well colleges do

By Richard Perez-Pena, New York Times

How well does a college teach, and what do its students learn? Rankings based on the credentials of entering freshmen are not hard to find, but how can students, parents and policy makers assess how well a college builds on that foundation?

What information exists has often been hidden from public view. But that may be changing.

In the wake of the No Child Left Behind federal education law, students in elementary, middle and high schools take standardized tests whose results are made public, inviting anyone to assess, however imperfectly, a school's performance. There is no comparable trove of public data for judging and comparing colleges.

Pieces of such a system may be taking shape, however, with

several kinds of national assessments – including, most controversially, standardized tests – gaining traction in recent years. More than 1,000 colleges may be using at least one of them.

“There’s a real shift in attitudes under way,” said David C. Paris, executive director of the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, a coalition of higher education groups. “We used to hear a lot more of, ‘The value of college can’t be measured,’ and now we hear more of, ‘Let’s talk about how we can measure.’ ”

In January, the New Leadership Alliance released guidelines calling on colleges to systematically “gather evidence of student learning” – though not explicitly advocating standardized tests – and release the results. The report was endorsed by several major organizations of colleges and universities.

Advocates say the point is not to measure how each college’s students perform after four years, which depends heavily on the caliber of students it enrolls in the first place, but to see how much they improve along the way. The concern is less about measuring knowledge of chemistry or literature than about harder to define skills like critical thinking and problem-solving.

Read the whole story

World of freelancing growing,

but not an easy way to make a living

By Kaomi Goetz, NPR

The recession brought widespread unemployment across the U.S., but it also prompted a spike in the number of freelance or independent workers.

More than 30 percent of the nation's workers now work on their own, and the research firm IDC projects the number of nontraditional office workers – telecommuters, freelancers and contractors – will reach 1.3 billion worldwide by 2015.

Typically, freelancers get to choose when and where they work. Many opt to set up shop in “co-working” arrangements, where they can rent a cubicle and other office resources by the day or the month.

It was once a relatively simple process to sign up with a co-working site.

But now, more companies are adopting a selective approach known as “curated co-working.” One such company, New York City's Grind, requires an application – and you have to be accepted to get started.

That means some would-be co-workers will find they don't make the cut.

“If you write two words and two sentences [on your application], you're probably not going to hear from me,” says Benjamin Dyett, a Grind co-founder and the company's chief gatekeeper. “But if you write two pages about why you want to work at Grind, I will bring you in for an interview.”

Read the whole story

Glimmer of hope in Tahoe real estate market

While real estate prices continue to decline in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the number of sales in the first quarter increased compared to 2011.



According to stats released by Chase International, for the quarter ending March 30 there was a 15 percent increase in units sold around the lake compared to a year ago.

Chase reports the median price of a home in Lake Tahoe is \$317,000 and the average home price is \$623,645, down 25 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

Truckee is showing signs of recovery mostly in sales of \$1 million-plus houses.

The condominium market around Lake Tahoe experienced declines for all segments – units sold was down 18 percent, average prices was down 35 percent and the median price down 7 percent.

California bumped Nevada from the leader board when it came to the number of foreclosures. RealtyTrac reports the Golden State had 133,245 foreclosure filings in the first quarter. This accounts for 23 percent of the 572,928 foreclosures in the country.

El Dorado County, according to RealtyTrac, had 23 percent fewer foreclosures the first quarter of this year compared to

2011.

According to Fannie Mae's March consumer attitudinal National Housing Survey, more Americans expect home rental and home purchase prices to increase over the next year.

"These trends may be providing Americans with an increased sense of urgency to buy a home as 73 percent of Americans now believe it is a good time to buy a home, up from 70 percent in February," the California Association of Realtors reports.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Judge rules to keep Nevada tax on casinos unchanged

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A Carson City District Court judge rejected an initiative petition proposing to create a new and higher rate of taxation for Nevada's largest casinos, finding that the 200 word description of effect of the measure was misleading.

In rejecting the petition, Judge James Todd Russell said he did not believe he had the authority to rewrite the

description himself.

Las Vegas businessman Monte Miller, who attended the hearing this week on his proposed gaming tax hike, said he will file a new proposal with the Secretary of State's office reflecting Russell's concerns and begin the signature gathering effort all over again.

The proposed petition was challenged by the Nevada Resort Association, which cited several concerns with the measure, including the use of the term "unrestricted" instead of "nonrestricted" to identify the affected gaming properties, and the use of the term "gross revenue" instead of "gross gaming revenue."

Miller, through a group called Nevadans for a Fair 9% Gambling Revenue Tax (NF9GRT), filed the initiative petition in February. It would set a new tax rate of 9 percent on net casino gambling revenue above \$250,000 per calendar month.

Under current law, net casino gambling revenue in excess of \$134,000 per calendar month is taxed at a 6.75 percent rate.

Las Vegas attorney Maggie McLetchie, representing Miller's group, argued that Russell could rewrite the description of effect for the proposed petition, thus allowing the signature gathering process to begin again without the potential for a new legal challenge.

But Carson City attorney Matt Griffin, representing the resort association, said Russell did not have the authority to rewrite the proposal, which would in effect take away the association's due process rights.

The description is flawed and the only solution is to reject the petition and require a new one to be filed, he said.

After the hearing, McLetchie said the NRA is using the legal process to stall the petition effort.

"They are obviously trying to exploit a process that is in place to ensure that voters are informed about the effects of a law to try to drag this out for as long as possible," she said. "And I think it is unfortunate and I think it is antithetical to the very nature of the initiative process."

McLetchie said judges have in the past rewritten descriptions of effect on other initiative petitions.

"The interest of the NRA is in trying to delay this process for as long as possible," she said. "Our interest is trying to get this into the hands of the voters."

The group has until Nov. 13 to collect 72,352 valid signatures from Nevada voters to send the proposal to the Nevada Legislature in 2013. If the Legislature does not enact the proposal within 40 days, it would go to voters in 2014 and take effect in 2015 if approved. The Legislature could also opt to put a competing proposal on the ballot for voters to consider.

The Legislature would have to get a two-thirds vote to approve the tax hike on casinos instead of sending it to the voters. But Legislative Counsel Brenda Erdoes said a competing tax proposal could be placed on the 2014 ballot by a simple majority vote of the Legislature because voters would have the final say.

If both measures received more than 50 percent of the vote, the one receiving the largest number of votes would take effect.

Miller said he is pursuing the gaming tax option in the face of a possible business profits tax appearing on the ballot in 2014 as well. The gaming tax, and another petition that could lead to an increase in the mining tax, would be on the ballot as alternatives to a business tax, he said.

Miller said the proposed business profits tax is a bad idea.

State AFL-CIO leader Danny Thompson said earlier this month his labor group is moving forward with a broad-based business profits tax ballot measure to raise money for education. It would assess a 2 percent tax on net profits in excess of \$500,000.

Ski industry veteran takes the helm of Kirkwood Mountain

By Kathryn Reed

With the sale of Kirkwood Mountain Resort to Vail Resorts being finalized Thursday, Casey Blann can officially call himself vice president and general manager of the ski area.

Blann, at 53, is a veteran of the ski industry – especially in Tahoe. Out of college it was Bill Killebrew who hired him to be a lift supervisor at Heavenly Mountain Resort in 1981. He worked there for a dozen years before going to Sierra-at-Tahoe for nine years.

For the past 10 years Blann has been back at Heavenly, with his most recent title being director of operations.



Casey Blann

“I’ve been able to live in the same house since 1989. I just

turn a different direction as I leave the driveway,” Blann told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The ski industry is in Blann’s blood. He grew up in Bend, Ore., where his dad was general manager of Mount Bachelor. At age 2 he was skiing.

Now he has a resort to call his own.

“Casey is a real mountain man and skier at heart, and really appreciates what Kirkwood is. I think it’s a great fit for him,” Blaise Carrig, co-president of Vail Resort’s mountain division, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Carrig added that beyond Blann’s expertise with mountain operations, his leadership, attentiveness to safety as well service were reasons he got the job.

(Internal and external candidates have applied for Blann’s old job at Heavenly, but a decision has not been made as to who will replace him.)

The enthusiasm as Blann talks about Kirkwood fills his voice. It also doesn’t hurt that his office allows him to watch the snow fall, even though visibility was just 100 feet. Friday was another powder day at the ‘Wood.

“This resort is incredible. Every time I come out here I find something new and unique,” Blann said.

When he describes Kirkwood he calls it the Jackson Hole of California.

While his commute is now longer, he doesn’t mind.

“I’m really excited to join the team out here at Kirkwood and take it to a different level,” Blann said.

A Vail Resorts trademark of high quality guest services is one element he will be working on. But he is quick to praise the

employees. Other than his arrival, no immediate staffing changes are taking place.

One of the reasons to buy the resort midseason was to be able to see how things really run and to strategize on changes for the upcoming season.

Blann said changes skiers are likely to notice at the start of the 2012-13 season are improvements to the food and beverage facilities. Specifics are still a ways off of what that might mean.

Epic Mix, a corporate-wide program that allows riders to track their vertical feet, get pins, share info with friends and other things, will be instituted at Kirkwood next season. Epic Photo will probably not be part of the initial launch.

Overall operations are being looked at, Blann said, with changes likely from the get-go. What will change still needs to be worked out.

He equated the changes about to take place at Kirkwood being similar to when he was at Sierra in 1993 and the Sprock family sold it to Fibreboard Corp.

Having more money makes a world of difference for any business.

Blann knows he can tap into the skills and resources of Vail Resorts to put Kirkwood on a bigger map.

The current master plan for Kirkwood calls for tons of improvements. Blann and others with Vail are going over that plan to see what they like, how they would prioritize what's in it, and are evaluating whether the U.S. Forest Service as land owner will need to be consulted about revising the plan.

"We will assess and prioritize operations as well as future capital investments," Blann said.

What Vail officials keep saying is they don't want to change the funkiness of the Kirkwood, just the functionality.

Kirkwood is known for its steeps and unique personality. An infusion of cash could mean making the terrain more accessible via new lifts as well as upgrading the ones in place. Kirkwood only has two high-speed quads and one of those accesses beginner terrain.

Summer operations are a growing component of what Kirkwood has to offer. An independent operator runs the zipline, there's a mountain bike park and disc golf. Plus, at different times the lifts will run for hikers to access endless miles of trails.

Blann met with the mountain bike team Thursday, but added, "It's premature to comment too much about summer."

For those who don't want to be limited to one resort, a pass for Heavenly-Northstar-Kirkwood is available. But the die-hard Kirkwood-only riders still have a pass just for the 'Wood.

Expensive gamble to try to be Olympic host city

By Fred Dreier, Forbes

Fans of the bobsled and biathlon should not hold their breath for the United States to host the Winter Olympics.

Officials in California and Nevada formed a committee last week to bring the 2022 Winter Olympics to the Lake Tahoe-Reno area, joining Denver, and Salt Lake City as potential American Olympic host cities. But due to the United States Olympic Committee's ongoing dispute with the International Olympic Committee over TV and sponsorship dollars, all three cities' chances are slim.



Riders check out the Olympic rings at the Women's Downhill before the Games in Whistler two years ago. Photo/LTN file

Rick Burton, a professor of sports management at Syracuse University's Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics, cautioned the American bid committees to spend wisely. Vancouver's successful bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics cost a reported \$34 million. Annecy, France, spent roughly \$30 million in its failed attempt to win the 2018 winter games, which will be hosted by Pyeongchang, South Korea.

"You can bang your drum from a PR standpoint, but until you know that the USOC has worked out its agreement with the IOC, I'd keep my powder dry," Burton said.

Since 2005, the USOC and IOC have sparred over the current revenue sharing agreement, which gifts 12.75 percent of U.S. broadcast revenue and between 16-20 percent of the IOC's global sponsorship revenues to the USOC. These are serious sums of cash. NBC reportedly paid \$456 million for broadcast rights for the 1996 Olympics, \$3.5 billion for 2000 through 2008, \$2 billion for 2010 and 2012 and 4.4 billion for 2016 through 2022. The revenue helps supply much of the USOC's revenues, which according to its 2010 tax filing, was \$250.6 million that year.

The USOC has publicly stated it will not submit any host bids to the IOC until the negotiations end. The two groups last met in January but failed to finalize a new plan. In September, Colorado state senator Michael Bennett wrote a public letter to USOC Chairman Larry Probst urging both sides to agree on a new deal.

"As you are aware, the work and preparation that it takes to produce a winning bid is extensive," Bennett wrote. "It would be unfortunate if the current impasse undermined these efforts."

If the IOC and USOC hammer out an agreement in the coming year, however, the American cities are still long shots for 2022, Olympics experts said. Burton, who was chief marketing

officer for the USOC at the Beijing Olympics, believes the USOC would rather bid for the 2024 summer games over the 2022 winter games because the summer games generate substantially more revenue.

Read the whole story