Laxalt revisits opinion on gun sales background checks

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A legal opinion from Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt on a stalled private gun sale background check measure says Gov. Brian Sandoval can again ask the FBI to perform the work.

But the legal analysis issued Thursday also says there are potential safety risks should Nevada change from its current status where all background checks are performed by the state.

Sandoval sought the opinion on Oct. 4, just days after 58 people were killed in a mass shooting in Las Vegas.

Read the whole story

Rare disease kills 2 LTWC bear cubs

By Kathryn Reed

Not every bear has always been able to be released into the wild, but until this year none had mysteriously died at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

Two have in a three-week period.

The diagnosis is adenovirus.

“It is rare,” Peter Tria with the California Department of

Fish and Wildlife said of the disease. “It has never been detected in free range wild black bears ever to our knowledge. It has been detected in captive bears.”

While the South Shore rehab facility’s goal is to heal injured animals and return them to their natural environment, the animals are considered captive while being treated.

This the first time anything like this has happened in the 17 years LTWC has been treating black bears under a permit from the state. (The facility has been open since 1978.)

The disconcerting thing is that it’s not known how the virus got into the facility. It is a strain found in canines and coyotes. However, it is something domestic dogs can be vaccinated against so those cases are seldom seen. Humans can also get the virus.

“We might not ever know (how we got it), but we are trying to prevent it from happening next year,” LTWC owner Tom Millham told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The four remaining bears have tested positive for adenovirus. However, they are continuing to put on weight, as is normal as they bulk up for their winter slumber. (Two of the original eight bears being cared for this season have already been released.) The bear deaths occurred in August and September.

Millham is now the only one allowed into the bear cage. Instead of feeding the bears twice a day, they are getting a larger quantity once a day. He’s wearing a disposable hospital gown, gloves and dipping his shoes in a bleach solution before putting on booties.

The goal is to keep that pen from being exposed to any outside contaminant. The bears are essentially quarantined.

Tria told *Lake Tahoe News* the state is happy with the measures LTWC is taking to ensure all of the animals’ health.

UC Davis and Cornell University have received blood samples. Scientists there, along with the state officials and local veterinarian Kevin Willits are trying to get to the bottom of the virus, but it’s possible answers may always be elusive.

Cheryl Millham, the other owner of LTWC with her husband, speculates that if their facility on Al Tahoe Boulevard that is being built were complete, it would have been easier to separate the sick animals. But until more funding is secured, the site continues to operate in the Millhams’ back yard.

Infernos could worsen Bay Area’s housing market

By George Avalos, Bay Area News Group

The deadly wildfires that roared through Sonoma and Napa counties this week, destroying thousands of homes, might also scorch the Bay Area’s already brutal housing market for months or years to come, experts warned Friday.

An estimated 2,800 homes have been destroyed in the wind-whipped infernos in Santa Rosa alone, and a total of about 3,000 homes have been lost in Northern California – a catastrophe that potentially leaves several thousand people to determine whether to eventually resume living on their devastated properties or to move elsewhere.

As a result, an already strained housing market – whose grim signature is skyrocketing home prices – could soon become even tighter as displaced residents begin scouting for places to live until their homes can be rebuilt, or they decide to relocate.

Read the whole story

‘Do not disturb’ signs scrutinized after Vegas shooting

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Review-Journal

When a “Do not disturb” sign hangs outside a hotel room for a while, staff will usually call or knock at some point to make sure everything’s OK.

But in the wake of the Las Vegas massacre, hotel operators may be asking themselves: How long should we wait before contacting guests who want to be left alone?

A gunman broke two windows in a 32nd-floor room at Mandalay Bay and sprayed bullets at concertgoers across the street on Oct. 1. Armed with at least 23 firearms, he killed 58 people at the Route 91 Harvest festival and left nearly 500 injured in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, and then killed himself. He may have been able to prepare for the attack because housekeeping staff didn’t enter the room for some time.

Read the whole story

NorCal fires’ death toll at 34; progress in containment

By Laura J. Nelson, Sonali Kohli, Paige St. John, Dakota Smith and Nina Agrawal, Los Angeles Times

The grim toll from the Northern California wildfires continued to rise Friday as officials said an estimated 5,700 structures were destroyed and that at least 34 people died.

Firefighters continued to gain control of some fires scorching Wine Country, thanks in part to continued calm winds in some parts of the region. Officials expect the death toll to rise as search efforts continue in neighborhoods from Santa Rosa to the hills of Napa County.

The Redwood Valley fire in Mendocino County has burned 34,000 acres and was 10 percent contained as of Friday. Between that fire and the 2,500-acre Sulphur fire, about 8,000 people have been evacuated, according to CalFire.

Read the whole story

Placerville extends urgency marijuana ordinance

By Mark Studyvin, Mountain Democrat

The Placerville City Council unanimously adopted a resolution to extend creating an urgency ordinance for marijuana at its

Tuesday night meeting.

Up for debate was the topic of regulating cannabis cultivation and prohibiting the manufacture, processing, laboratory testing, labeling, storing and wholesale and retail distribution.

The urgency ordinance was originally extended in December of last year. California government code allows for these extensions. This would be the final extension and is good for up to one year. The current extension expiration is Oct. 28.

Read the whole story

Fires devastate California cannabis economy

By David Downs, San Francisco Chronicle

California's $21 billion cannabis economy is reeling from likely more than a billion dollars in crop losses related to a series of deadly wildfires that swept through the cultivation heartlands of Mendocino, Sonoma, Napa and Solano counties this week.

Up to one-third of the annual outdoor cannabis crop in those regions could be destroyed or significantly damaged as 22 wildfires continue to burn in California. The fires have torched more than 170,000 acres and thousands of homes, farms and businesses, and taken the lives of at least 31 people. Hundreds remain missing.

The entire supply chain has been damaged as well, because the

fires swept through not only cannabis gardens but the properties of seed breeders and those who make and sell cuttings, as well as cannabis oil extraction facilities, manufacturers and distributors.

Read the whole story

Weary Californians try to find all that's lost as fires rage



The wind forecast is not good for firefighting.

By Associated Press

They are trying to find lost loved ones, to sift through the ashes of their homes, to count, identify and mourn the dozens of dead – all while the wildfires rage on.

Communities in Northern California prepared for another day under siege Friday, despite being driven to exhaustion by

evacuations, destruction and danger in the deadliest week of wildfires the state has ever seen.

“It wears you out,” said winemaker Kristin Belair, who was driving back from Lake Tahoe to her as-yet-unburned home in Napa. “Anybody who’s been in a natural disaster can tell you that it goes on and on. I think you just kind of do hour by hour almost.”

Read the whole story

Complaint filed against ZCES first-grade teacher

By Kathryn Reed

An alleged whack of a first-grader’s knuckles that left a mark sparked an investigation into the behavior of a teacher at Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

“I’m not interested in speaking to you about this. The matter has been handled,” teacher Brenda Capshaw told *Lake Tahoe News* before abruptly hanging up.

Amber Prevost, the mom of the 6-year-old, had plenty to say. She is still furious with how things were handled at the local level and district office.

It was the child’s word against his teacher’s because there were no witnesses.

A second incident occurred that same week in September, Prevost said. Her son asked to use the restroom and was denied to the point he almost wet his pants. This had her livid. A

formal complaint was filed.

The district conducted an investigation. And while the conclusion was the knuckle incident did not take place, safety plans for the child are now in effect.

“They said there was no wrong-doing from the teacher. They dismissed it all,” Prevost told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This isn’t the only time a spotlight has been shined on Capshaw. Other parents and students have had run-ins with her through the years. More than one parent even wrote a letter to the board of education in response to the Prevost incident to express their experiences and concerns.

Principal Nancy Cauley and Superintendent Teri White said because it is a personnel issue they cannot talk about what may have happened, the outcome of the investigation, or any changes that were a result of this case.

What Prevost wanted as a solution was to move her son into the other first-grade class. She was told by Cauley that couldn’t happen because other parents would want to do the same thing.

The child told his parents the pencil whack was because he didn’t get into line immediately with the other kids. He was at his desk playing with the pencil and Capshaw reportedly took it and hit him with it.

The youngster repeated this story multiple times to authorities.

“What I told him is he is standing up to a bully,” Prevost said.

The child was scared to go back to school and was crying about the thought of it. His parents kept him out for two weeks. Prevost said the superintendent sent a letter threatening to take action related to truancy laws.

This has been the second week he has returned to school. Things are better in spite of being in the same class.

To make him feel safe he is allowed to leave the classroom at any time without permission. He has an adult staff member who is his “safe” point of contact if he needs to talk to someone.

“He said ever since the teacher had to a sign paper she has been nice,” Prevost said, adding that the yelling in class has subsided as well.

So, while the district says nothing happened, it did implement some rudimentary safeguards.

Car technology worsens driver distraction

By Joan Lowy, AP

The infotainment technology that automakers are cramming into the dashboard of new vehicles is making drivers take their eyes off the road and hands off the wheel for dangerously long periods of time, an AAA study says.

The study released last week is the latest by University of Utah Professor David Strayer, who has been examining the impact of infotainment systems on safety for AAA’s Foundation for Traffic Safety since 2013. Past studies also identified problems, but Strayer said the “explosion of technology” has made things worse.

Automakers now include more options to allow drivers to use social media, email and text. The technology is also becoming more complicated to use. Cars used to have a few buttons and

knobs. Some vehicles now have as many as 50 buttons on the steering wheel and dashboard that are multi-functional. There are touch screens, voice commands, writing pads, heads-up displays on windshields and mirrors and 3-D computer-generated images.

Read the whole story