El Dorado County convicts man on molestation charges

An El Dorado County jury returned with a verdict of guilty on July 29 on all 11 counts against Howard Martin Harmless II.

Harmless had been charged with nine counts of child molestation and two counts of providing drugs to juveniles.

Harmless faces 25 years to life in prison when he is sentenced Sept. 2.

California adopts education standards to get federal money

By Howard Blume, Los Angeles Times

At a special meeting Monday, the state board of education unanimously adopted common national academic standards. These standards are to provide the basis for future instruction in the state.

The common-standards initiative has been pushed by the Obama administration, but executed through a voluntary national effort in which nearly all states are participating.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger applauded the vote, praising the state board for maintaining “California’s high expectations and our belief that every student is capable of success in the classroom.”

The standards are to ultimately supplant California's current academic framework, which is widely viewed as among the best in the nation, although the same cannot be said of the results in the classroom.

Read the whole story

NV Energy doubles second quarter profits

By Reno Gazette-Journal

NV Energy Inc., doubled its net income in the second quarter from the same period in 2009, according to the utility's earnings report released today.

The Las Vegas-based utility reported profits for the April-June period of $36.9 million, or 16 cents per share, compared with $18.4 million, or 8 cents, a year earlier.
Read the whole story

Tahoe benefits from Reid's success in securing earmarks

By Erin Kelly, Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON – As he fights for a fifth term, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., is touting his clout as a key reason that voters should keep him in Washington.

But just what has Reid's seniority – and his powerful position as majority leader – brought Nevada?



Harry Reid

The answer, if you look just at the federal earmarks he's gotten in the past two years to fund Nevada projects, is nearly $662 million, to pay for everything from Lake Tahoe restoration to firefighting equipment for Reno.

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Where the earmark money has gone

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Reid ranked No. 6 in the Senate in fiscal year 2010 for the number of earmarks he got for his state, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, an anti-earmark group.

Read the whole story

Containment near on 14,000 acre fire in LA County

By Ann M. Simmons, Los Angeles Times

Firefighters have made significant progress in taming an

aggressive wildfire that has burned almost 14,000 acres in northern Los Angeles County.

By 6am Sunday, containment of the Crown fire, which had ravaged areas of western Palmdale and the Leona Valley, had reached 87%, according to Inspector Don Kunitomi, a spokesman for the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Firefighters worked through the night, constructing additional containment lines, extinguishing embers and patrolling burn areas, officials said.

Kunitomi said that, despite low humidity, calmer winds had aided firefighters in dousing the blaze.

Read the whole story

Click here for an update on the Plumas County fire.

Burn ban in basin takes effect today

The fire chief for the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is suspending residential burning, also known as “dooryard” burning, effective today through the remainder of fire season.

The prohibition applies to debris burning on private, state and federal lands of El Dorado and Placer counties in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Residential debris burning is already banned within the city of South Lake Tahoe, and in the Tahoe Douglas and North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection districts in Nevada.

Lake Tahoe weather conditions have generally been warm and

dry, leading fire protection officials to move to end residential debris burning due to increased risks. The ban is for residential burns only and does not prevent federal, state and local fire managers from conducting prescribed fire operations necessary for fuels reduction on public lands. Prescribed fire work is conducted by fully equipped professional wildland firefighting crews under favorable weather conditions.

The ban also does not prohibit small, contained campfires on private land outside South Lake Tahoe, built by the property owner or with the written permission of the property owner. Remember never to leave campfires unattended and always extinguish them properly – drown, stir and feel.

The residential burn ban will remain in effect until temperatures, winds and humidity allow for safer conditions.

Plumas fire closes traffic at Hwys. 70-89

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Plumas National Forest fire crews were dispatched to the Bar Fire in the western Sierra today where at least 100 acres was burning in steep terrain, about 80 miles northwest of Reno.

The U.S. Forest Service says the fire in the Feather River Canyon, near Rich Bar, approximately 4 miles east of the town of Belden.

Multiple resources have been assigned to the fire including nine engines, 10 smoke jumpers and multiple aircraft.

Highway 70 from the junction of Highway 89 (Greenville “Wye”) has been closed to non-emergency traffic.

The cause of the fire is unknown and is currently under investigation.

Firefighters gaining control on S. Calif. wildfires

By Ann M. Simmons, Los Angeles Times

By late Friday, firefighters appeared to be gaining control of the Crown fire near Palmdale.

Authorities did not issue any further updates on the fire’s status, leaving the total acreage burned so far at 13,000 acres, but the day’s aggressive aerial assault appears to have been successful.

Several spot fires continued to burn throughout the area, however, including near the backyards of some homes. About 300 homes were still under evacuation orders.

Several structures have been damaged or destroyed since the fire began Thursday afternoon, including some homes, but officials have yet to determine the total number.

Read the whole story

Click here to read about the fires near Tehachapi.

Official: Climate changes create more intense wildfires



By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

With a warming climate making for longer fire seasons and more intense wildfires, an ongoing effort to revamp the nation's firefighting strategy is gaining increasing importance, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service said.

Tom Tidwell, in Reno last week as part of a coalition of officials discussing fire policy, said a changing climate is adding urgency to an already extensive danger posed by fire.

"Fires are burning hotter, and they are more intense," Tidwell said. "We see it both in the forests and on the rangeland habitat."

Mountain snowpacks are melting earlier, and fire seasons are lasting 30 to 45 days longer across many areas of the West, Tidwell said.

"The type of fire behavior is very different from what we had even 10 years ago," Tidwell said.

Read the whole story

9 people express interest in SLT City Council race

More people are expressing interest in the South Lake Tahoe City Council race.

Joy Curry, Steve Kubby, Adrian Gooch, Elizabeth Hallen and Doug Cichowicz have taken out papers.

They join Tom Davis, Angela Swanson, Georg May and Claire Fortier.

None of them has turned in their papers.

Documents must be turned in by Aug. 6. If an incumbent does not run, that deadline is extended to Aug. 11.

Councilman Jerry Birdwell hasn’t made his decision public. Councilmembers Kathay Lovell and Bill Crawford are not seeking another term.

The lone candidate to qualify for the Nov. 2 election is David Olivio, who is running for treasurer.