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.”

Calif. death row inmates sentenced in region have waited an average of 21 years

By Hattie Xu, Sacramento Bee

While the state of Arkansas made news earlier this year when it executed four inmates in eight days, California has not seen an execution since 2006, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Of the 123 deaths of inmates who were on California’s death row since 1978, just 15 were from execution, according to data from CDCR. A majority – 60 percent – died of natural causes, while another 20 percent committed suicide.

On average, inmates who were sentenced in the Sacramento region – which includes El Dorado and Placer counties – have waited on death row for 21 years, according to data from CDCR. Sixty-six percent of them have waited for more than 20 years. While two inmates were condemned to death just three years

ago, one – Joe Johnson – has been waiting for 36 years.

Read the whole story

Report: Full-time jobs tough to find in Nev.

By Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada is the third-hardest state in which to find full-time work, behind New Mexico and Alaska, according a report by the news and opinion website 24/7 Wall St.

The state had an 11.9 percent underemployment rate, compared to the national rate of 9.5 percent, during the 12-month period analyzed through the first quarter of this year, according to the report released Tuesday.

The underemployment rate is a combination of workers who are highly skilled but working in low-paying or low-skill jobs, along with part-time workers who would prefer to be working full time.

Nevada officials chimed in with several notes of caution on the report.

Read the whole story

Resistance to expansion of cell transmitters

By Rennie Svirnovskiy, Sacramento Bee

Dave Roberts has seen plenty of calamitous fires, and the lingering thought after they're extinguished always is, "If we'd only been there sooner."

The El Dorado Hills fire chief knows well that for every minute a structure fire burns, it doubles in size, putting both civilians and his firefighters at risk. He also knows there has to be a way to cut response times.

That's why he and the California State Sheriffs' Association have joined with California telecommunications companies and chambers of commerce to back legislation aimed at providing a more robust system of cellular telephone service. Senate Bill 649 would make it easier and cheaper for the companies to place small transmitters in cities and counties. More cells, they argue, will improve service and add critical redundancy to phone systems in areas affected by wildfires or other natural disasters.

But as the bill breezes through the Legislature with few dissenting votes, hundreds of city and county governments are pushing back.

Read the whole story

California may lower State Bar requirements

By Isha Salian, Reno Gazette-Journal

The State Bar of California moved forward last week with a proposal to lower the passing score of the bar exam by three points – a change that could increase the rate of passing by about eight percentage points.

The State Bar made the proposal open for a public comment period until Aug. 25, with the goal of finalizing a recommendation in September.

Just 43 percent of test-takers passed the July 2016 California bar exam, fewer than any other state and the lowest figure for California in more than three decades.

Read the whole story

Water rescue at South Shore marsh

Four people learned the hard way that the meadows in the basin are more marsh than dry landscape.

South Lake Tahoe firefighters had to rescue the four on the afternoon of Aug. 5 near the south end of Baldwin Beach.

“They didn’t realize how deep the mud was,” Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News.*

They were up to their chests in mud and water.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Clean Air Act changes would test Calif.

By Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times

California is confronting the limits of its power to save federal environmental protections as Congress and the Trump administration take aim at a landmark law the state has relied on for decades to clean the air of noxious smog.

A push by Republicans to roll back parts of the Clean Air Act would affect California more than any other state, rattling its lawmakers and regulators. And their legal authority to pick up the fight against California's smog on their own is constrained.

The House last month passed a bill fiercely opposed by doctors and public health groups, including the American Lung Assn. and the American Academy of Pediatrics, that would delay for years new anti-pollution standards aimed at ultimately preventing 160,000 childhood asthma attacks and as many as 220 premature deaths in California each year.

The Trump administration had already tried using regulatory authority to put the standards on hold for a year, but walked back that action Wednesday after California and 14 other states filed suit against the delay.

Read the whole story

EDC tax evader going to prison

Former El Dorado Hills resident Kamyar “Kami” Soltani, 47, was sentenced Aug. 4 to six months in prison, six months home confinement with electronic monitoring, and ordered to pay $150,446 in restitution for tax evasion..

According to court documents, Soltani attempted to evade his tax obligations for tax years 2005, 2006, and 2007. Soltani worked in the used car sales industry. In each of the tax years in question, Soltani received taxable income between $229,000 and $296,000 and failed to file timely income tax returns for the tax years of 2005 and 2006. He ultimately filed tax returns for all three tax years in March 2008, but those returns only reported income of approximately $14,000 to $18,500 in each year.

As a result of his conduct and tax filings, Soltani evaded $150,446 in federal income taxes, paid no taxes for those years, and in each year fraudulently claimed and received tax refunds of over $2,000 by falsely claiming that he was entitled to an Earned Income Tax Credit reserved for taxpayers with low and moderate income. Soltani admitted he acted willfully to evade taxes, in part, through his filing of false tax returns and by receiving his income in the form of cash and through indirect payments made to third parties.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Federal pot task force offers little on new policies

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The betting was that law-and-order Attorney General Jeff Sessions would come out against the legalized marijuana industry with guns blazing. But the task force Sessions assembled to find the best legal strategy is giving him no ammunition, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety, a group of prosecutors and federal law enforcement officials, has come up with no new policy recommendations to advance the attorney general's aggressively anti-marijuana views. The group's report largely reiterates the current Justice Department policy on marijuana.

It encourages officials to keep studying whether to change or rescind the Obama administration's more hands-off approach to enforcement — a stance that has allowed the nation's experiment with legal pot to flourish. The report was not slated to be released publicly, but portions were obtained by the AP.

Read the whole story

Best way to increase housing

supply? Build more

By Patrick Clark, Bloomberg

It’s widely agreed that housing markets across the U.S. are hurting for new inventory, driving up prices and postponing homeownership for young Americans. What’s driving the inventory shortage is a murkier matter.

A new report from Trulia tests some popular explanations and comes to this conclusion: We’re going to have to build our way out of it.

The report looked at five possible causes for the inventory shortage, including the sluggish pace of new home construction, the growing role of single-family-rental landlords and the share of older homeowners in a given market. Also: price appreciation and the gaps among entry-level, step-up and luxury homes.

Read the whole story