

Nev. lawmakers back blood-only detection of marijuana DUIs

By Alison Noon, AP

CARSON CITY — Weighing in on how Nevada should test people for stoned driving, lawmakers advanced a measure on Friday to eliminate urine samples as a viable measure for police to show a driver to be impaired by marijuana.

Under the bipartisan proposal, law enforcement officers would continue using blood tests to prove a person was illegally operating a passenger car, commercial truck or boat while high.

The bill would retain specific legal limits set in 1999 for drivers' blood content of THC, the psychoactive chemical in pot. Anyone with a blood-THC level at or above 5 nanograms per milliliter is considered too high to drive.

Read the whole story

Nev. Legislature debates tax on short-term rentals

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — There was no opposition Thursday to a bill imposing lodging taxes on short-term rentals arranged through online outfits like Airbnb if such rentals are allowed by

local governments.

Assemblywoman Irene Bustamante Adams, D-Las Vegas, said the purpose of Assembly Bill 294 is to bring parity to the transient rental market and recognize the growing share private rentals are having on temporary lodging.

Regulation of private home or room rentals in Nevada is a mixed bag.

Read the whole story

Heavy lifting begins for Nevada legislators

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – It's crunch time at the Nevada Legislature, with 30 days and counting to a mandatory June 5 adjournment.

Based on legislative history, 75 percent of the work of the 120-day session will be accomplished in the remaining 25 percent of the time available.

Weekends off will become a distant memory.

But a big stumbling block remains in the rush to sine die: The party-line disagreement over funding for Education Savings Accounts.

Read the whole story

Future STHS principal may get 5.2% raise

Lake Tahoe Unified School District's board on Tuesday is being asked to increase the rate of pay for the next principal of South Tahoe High School.

The recommendation is for the rate to increase by 5.2 percent. In year one the rate would be \$111,601, going to \$134,040 in year eight.

The position would also come with a 3.25 percent increase in the number of duty days.

The May 9 staff report says the reason to do this is to offer "a comparable salary for this region."

The new hire would get an additional \$1,714 for every master's and/or doctorate degree awarded from an accredited college or university. This is the same for all management personnel.

STHS needs a new principal because Chad Houck gave notice that this would be his last year. He was the lone casualty of the school receiving a probationary accreditation status.

Also on the May 9 school board agenda is an update on the accreditation process.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

ACA helped make a 50% dent in personal bankruptcies

By Emma Court, Market Watch

The Affordable Care Act was among the likely factors that assisted with a big decrease – nearly 50 percent – in personal bankruptcy filings in the last six years, according to a Consumer Reports analysis.

Other factors, including new bankruptcy laws, a rebounding economy and tighter credit requirements, also likely helped with the reduction, with filings dropping from 1.54 million in 2010 to 770,846 last year.

There's no way to know what made the biggest difference in that drop, since those filing for personal bankruptcy don't state a specific reason for it.

Read the whole story

Some local governments play ball with Airbnb

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Nevada County this week became the latest municipality – and the first in the Sacramento region – to reach an agreement allowing the fast-growing vacation housing website Airbnb to collect and pay transient occupancy taxes on behalf of its hosts.

The San Francisco company says it has worked out deals with 275 jurisdictions across the world to collect local taxes.

The Nevada County agreement – which does not include incorporated towns – could double the county's transient occupancy tax receipts, said Tina Vernon, the county treasurer and tax collector.

Airbnb represents a growing share of Lake Tahoe's short-term housing. Airbnb said its hosts in the Lake Tahoe region collected \$32 million from Nov. 15, 2016, to April 15, 2017 – up 50 percent over the prior year.

Read the whole story

Fight against invasive species goes high-tech

By Seth Borenstein, AP

WASHINGTON – A robot zaps and vacuums up venomous lionfish in Bermuda. A helicopter pelts Guam's trees with poison-baited dead mice to fight the voracious brown tree snake. A special boat with giant winglike nets stuns and catches Asian carp in the U.S. Midwest.

In the fight against alien animals that invade and overrun native species, the weird and wired wins.

"Critters are smart – they survive," said biologist Rob "Goose" Gosnell, head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's wildlife services in Guam, where brown tree snakes have gobbled up nearly all the native birds. "Trying to outsmart them is hard to do."

Washoe deputy mistakenly shoots live round at bear

Updated May 7:

The following statement was issued by Washoe County Sheriff Chuck Allen this morning after learning that the bear from the May 6 incident has died: "I am saddened to hear of the passing of the bear from yesterday's incident in Incline Village involving one of our deputies. We appreciate the efforts made by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The sheriff's office will thoroughly review the incident and take whatever measures are deemed appropriate."

—

An Incline Village bear is recovering from a gunshot wound.

A Washoe County sheriff's deputy intended to shoot a rubber round to scare the bear away, but instead loaded a live round.

Officers had been called at 10:45am May 6 to deal with a group of bears near residences in the area of Driver Way and Village Boulevard. They found a mother bear and three cubs.

"This group of bears had been previously identified as food aggressive and deputies have had numerous encounters with this group in recent weeks," the department said in a press release.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife was notified and arrived on scene at approximately noon. NDOW transported the adult bear

to a veterinarian for evaluation and treatment. NDOW says the cubs are old enough to be on their own and that NDOW will formulate a management plan for the cubs.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Suspect named in '04 killing of EDC counselors



Jason Allen and Lindsay Cutshall

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

A man has been identified as the suspected killer of two El Dorado County camp counselors who were shot and killed while in their sleeping bags on a Sonoma County beach nearly 13 years ago.

Sonoma County Sheriff Steve Freitas said at a May 5 news conference that Shaun Gallon, 38, of Forestville in Sonoma County is suspected in the deaths of Lindsay Cutshall, 22, of Ohio and Jason Allen, 26, of Michigan. Gallon has not been arrested in their killings but is in jail as a suspect in an

unrelated homicide.

On Aug. 13, 2004, Cutshall and Allen left the Rock-N-Water camp near Coloma, where they served as rafting and climbing leaders. When they didn't return three days later, a search began.

Read the whole story

STPUD water, sewer bills expected to rise

By Kathryn Reed

Aging and inadequate infrastructure are the big reasons South Tahoe Public Utility District continues to raise rates.

The massive **sewer line failure** in the Tahoe Keys that is still being fixed is one example. Generators that failed during the January floods is another. Twenty-five miles of water lines are too small to handle a massive fire.

July 1 will likely mark the fourth of five years' worth of rate increases – 6½ percent for water, 6 percent for sewer. This will raise quarterly residential bills by about \$16.35. Today it is \$260, while the average rate in the basin is \$351.

The board had a public hearing regarding the 2017-18 budget on May 4, but only *Lake Tahoe News* showed up. The electeds are expected to vote on the budget on May 18.

The current budget was approved a year ago on a 4-1 vote, with board member Jim Jones voting no because he believes rates should be higher. He is a staunch proponent of being on a more

aggressive schedule to fix the infrastructure.

The district has identified \$242 million in water projects and \$137 million in sewer. The 10-year plan addresses \$97.4 million of those combined needs.

To fund the ongoing infrastructure needs the district anticipates future rate hikes. In fiscal year 2018-19 it will likely be a 5 percent water increase and 6 percent sewer.

In fall 2018 South Tahoe PUD plans to engage the public in discussions about another multi-year Proposition 218 notice. The 218 notice is a mechanism by which if enough ratepayers protest the proposed increases, the district would not be able to go forward with them. Locking in the rates allows for the district to be more strategic with its planning. The annual rates can always be decreased by the board, but not increased once the 218 figures are approved.

The district is adamant the rate increases are strictly for projects – not for salaries. That is all well and good to say, but if employees didn't get raises, then there would be more money for projects and the rate increases could be less.

The district just started negotiations with employees. The current contract expires June 30. The long-term budget – South Tahoe PUD goes 10 years out – includes potential 2 percent annual salary increases.

Compared to 2009, the district's operations and maintenance costs are 12.57 percent lower today. In the same time span, inflation went up 11.5 percent.

"The district can operate another 10 years with the current rates in place if we eliminate the capital improvement projects," Paul Hughes, chief financial officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Halting projects isn't going to happen. For one, things break

and have to be fixed. Secondly, the state mandates some projects – like water meters. The final 5,000 should be in the ground in the next three years.

Like most public agencies in California, South Tahoe PUD is expecting more money to have to be allocated toward employees' retirement. CalPERS has told government bodies it needs more money to make up for investments that didn't perform as well as they needed to in order to have the cash to pay retirees.

STPUD expects the PERS cost for fiscal year 2017-18 to be \$1,477,325. By fiscal year 2022-23 that number is projected to increase to \$2,512,000. STPUD's share of the risk pool's unfunded accrued liability is \$7,254,597.