

Panel: Undocumented immigrants boost Nevada economy

By Chris Kudialis, Las Vegas Sun

Deporting large numbers of unauthorized immigrants would hurt families and the U.S. economy, leaders of a national advocacy group for Hispanics living in the United States and Latino community members said in Las Vegas on March 3.

“Unauthorized immigrants pay more than \$12 billion in Social Security taxes each year alone,” Nevada Tax Commission member and UNLV law Professor Francine Lipman said. “But their value to our tax system goes even beyond that.”

The panel, led by Washington-based leaders from the National Council of La Raza, said if all undocumented immigrants were deported in Nevada, the Silver State’s gross domestic product would drop by \$5.7 billion annually.

Read the whole story

Calif. flood control called a life and death crisis



Water flowing from the eroded overflow spillway of Oroville Dam in February. Photo/California Department of Water Resources

By Sean Cockerham, McClatchy

Experts say California's Oroville dam crisis demonstrates the life-and-death urgency of federal spending to upgrade aging dams. But there are doubts about whether President Trump will agree.

California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird told the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on Wednesday that further deterioration of the nation's aging flood control and water infrastructure systems will put lives at risk.

"We should use the opportunity presented by this situation to invest in existing infrastructure and fund innovative projects that leverage science to meet the challenge of extreme

weather,” he said.

Trump told Congress on Tuesday that he would ask for a \$1 trillion package “financed through both public and private capital” to improve the nation’s infrastructure.

Read the whole story

Bill would put an end to California fire fee

A bill introduced this week would kill the fire fee many people in rural California have to pay, including those in parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

This is not the first time state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, has tried to do away with a measure that was approved in 2011.

“This fire tax is illegal and unfair – plain and simple,” Gaines said in a press release. “Many rural property owners already pay local fire agencies for protection so it is clearly double-taxation and it is being dumped on the backs of rural Californians when parts of my district still have a more than 10-percent unemployment rate and families are struggling to make ends meet.”

Senate Bill 9 would reverse the annual \$152.33 fee for fire prevention services charged to property owners located in state responsibility areas designated by CalFire.

Their property taxes already contribute to the service contracts that counties have with CalFire.

“The answer to fire protection in California is not illegal

taxes, but budgets that invest in core government services that protect every citizen in the state – rural, urban and suburban,” Gaines said.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Hazardous driving conditions expected in Sierra

Caltrans is warning motorists traveling over Donner or Echo summits to be prepared for travel delays through Monday morning.

The National Weather Service says snow levels may be as low as 2,000 feet and that up to 3 feet of snow could fall in the higher elevations.

Windy conditions are also forecast, so low-visibility, whiteout conditions may occur.

Motorists are required to carry chains even if driving a four- or all-wheel drive vehicle with mud and snow rated tires.

Motorists using cable (ladder) chains may be turned around on Highway 267 at the Northstar and Kings Beach chain control checkpoints. Although cable chains are legal traction devices, they’ve proven to be ineffective when attempting to drive over Brockway Summit during heavy snow storms.

Highway 50 traffic over Echo Summit may be held intermittently for avalanche control. Highway 89 over Emerald Bay is currently open, but may be closed due to avalanche hazards. Traffic on Interstate 80 may also be held intermittently to clear traffic incidents or if low-visibility conditions occur.

Traffic alert for Highway 50 in Carson City

Highway 50 and south Carson Street will be reduced to one lane in each direction March 6-9 from about 9pm to 6am.

Freeway signs are being installed in anticipation of the connector opening.

The detours include:

March 7: South Carson Street will be temporarily closed directly south of the Highway 50 intersection between approximately 1-4am. Traffic will be detoured via Clear Creek and Snyder avenues.

March 8: South Carson Street will be temporarily closed directly north of the Highway 50 intersection between approximately 1-4am. Traffic will be detoured via Clear Creek and Snyder avenues.

March 9: Highway 50 will be closed directly west of the intersection of South Carson Street between approximately 1-4am. Traffic needing to travel between Lake Tahoe and Carson City during the three-hour closure period will need to detour through Kingsbury Grade or Mt. Rose Highway.

The project is expected to complete, opening the final segment of freeway to traffic, in late summer 2017.

Rethinking pain management to curb drug abuse

By Kathryn Reed

Understanding drug addiction – by the user, health care professionals and loved ones – is the first step.

Terri Cherry, retired pharmacist from Barton Health, this week gave a talk about prescription drug abuse. She emphasized that it is a disease, not a weakness – and certainly no one makes a conscious decision to become addicted.

“Addictive habits have common physical attributes. They release the chemical dopamine. It’s a feel good drug; a euphoric feeling, positive reinforcement so you want to do it again. That’s part of the addiction cycle,” Cherry said.

In 2015, 10.3 million people in the United State were using opioids for non-medical reasons, Cherry said. Between 2004 and 2011, visits to emergency rooms for misuse or abuse of opioids increased 153 percent.

Opioids are both legal and illegal. They include OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, morphine, fentanyl, and heroine.

One of the problems with pain management is that people want to get to where they don’t have any pain. That, according to Cherry, can be an unrealistic expectation. It is also one of the ways to become addicted – people erasing the pain with just one more pill.

“People need to accept there may be some level of pain. They need to work toward regaining function rather than strive for being pain free,” Cherry said.

People also need to take some responsibility. It starts with family and friends often being the first supplier. They have

some leftover meds and willingly share them. Cherry said that must stop for a variety of reasons. When those run out, it's a trip to the doctor's office. Patients need to ask questions – to question the dosage and quantity, to make sure it's appropriate for them.

“Start low, go slow” is Cherry's mantra for drugs. She also advocates for non-pharmaceutical practices such as massage, using heat and/or ice, aromatherapy, music, anti-inflammatories and anti-depressants.

Naloxone is a drug that reverses an opioid overdose. Pharmacists are allowed to prescribe it without going to a doctor.

“It effectively blocks opioid receptors. The goal is to try to save some lives,” Cherry said. Seeking immediate medical care is still necessary.

She said the pharmacies in South Lake Tahoe require a prescription because the pharmacists have not gone through the training to be able to dispense the drug on their own. Rite-Aid, Cherry said, will administer it without a doctor's prescription, but it must be ordered.

Cherry said those more prone to becoming addicted to prescription meds have a family history of abuse, use multiple providers, take multiple drugs, have medication with high doses, have a mental illness, are low income, lack education and live in a rural area.

Addiction, though, is a disease that can strike anyone – any age, ethnicity, income level or profession.

Injured Vail skier sues snowboarder after collision

By Kirk Mitchell, Denver Post

A California woman has sued a snowboarder who plowed into her from behind at Vail Ski Resort, causing severe injuries, including broken bones.

Hsu Chiang Chou sued Philip Moroco II in Denver U.S. District Court on Thursday for a collision that happened Jan. 17 on Vail Mountain, according to the lawsuit filed Thursday by Denver attorney Russell Hatten.

Hsu Chou is seeking reimbursement for economic and non-economic damages and lawsuit costs including attorneys fees. Damages exceed \$75,000, according to the lawsuit. Hsu Chou suffered clavicle and rib fractures, the lawsuit says.

Read the whole story

Tools not adequate to measure Sierra snow

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

One sure sign the Sierra Nevada is experiencing a historic winter is the snowpack is getting too deep for devices scientists use to measure it.

It's a problem that cropped up Wednesday when researchers sought to confirm snow depth at a data site on Slide Mountain

at Mount Rose Ski Tahoe near Reno.

“We’re not even close,” hydrologist Jeff Anderson said after jamming an aluminum tube more than 16 feet into the snowpack hoping to reach the ground below.

Read the whole story

Tribal officer in car accident in Markleeville

A Washoe tribe police officer was involved in a traffic collision on Friday morning.

A 19-year-old Markleeville woman was driving north on Diamond Valley Road just before 11am March 3 when she pulled onto the shoulder. As the 25-year-old male officer as passing the woman’s vehicle she “immediately made an abrupt U-turn, directly into the path of the police,” according to the California Highway Patrol.

Both vehicles sustained extensive damage. No injuries were reported. The names of the two drivers have not been released.

The accident is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

10-year prison term for ex-SLT fire captain

Former South Lake Tahoe fire captain Mark Wyant is going to prison for 10 years for transportation of child pornography.

The 46-year-old pleaded guilty in December to the one count and on March 3 was sentenced.



Mark Wygant

A plea deal brought the original six charges involving sexual exploitation and attempted sexual exploitation of minors down to the one charge.

From early 2011 to early 2012, Wygant surreptitiously filmed a child on numerous occasions using a hidden cellphone and hidden "spy cameras" that he had purchased for that purpose, according to court records. He then transported those videos and photos from a location in Butte County to South Lake Tahoe. Wygant lived in Chico with his family and worked in Tahoe.

A flash drive was found in an unassigned locker at a city fire station containing more than 5,000 images of children engaged in sexually explicit conduct and more than 50 video files depicting child pornography, according to court records.

Wygant has been in custody since his arrest on Jan. 29, 2015. He resigned from the fire department the next month.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*