

Traffic leaving Truckee at a standstill

Holiday traffic on westbound Interstate 80 is gridlocked through Truckee. Side streets are not a better alternative, according to Truckee officials.

“If you are trying to get over the summit to Sacramento or Bay Area, please do not try to use your GPS to find side streets, they are clogged or closed. Old Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) from Donner Lake to Sugar Bowl is closed with no estimated time for reopening and is not a way over the summit,” Truckee police officers warn.

Donner Pass Road from Highway 89 south to the Donnergate area is gridlocked with westbound traffic. There is not alternative route.

Traffic issues on town streets may be reported to 530.550.2320.

Pyramid Lake back open for business



The Sutcliffe Highway along
Pyramid Lake in mid-January.
Photo/NDOT

Pyramid Lake opened to fishing and other activities on Saturday after being closed since Jan. 11.

The Pauite Tribe's land in Northern Nevada was cut off because the highway sustained massive damage.

The tribe is estimated to have lost \$1 million between repairing its roads and loss in fishing license revenue, which is one of its main sources of income.

Roads by the lake have not all been repaired so people are asked to drive with caution.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Caesars to pay \$44M to leave Nevada Power

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — Caesars Entertainment Corp. has reached agreement to pay a \$44 million “exit fee” to leave as a retail customer of Nevada Power and purchase its own power supplies on the wholesale market.

In a stipulation filed last week with the Public Utilities Commission, Caesars has also agreed to pay \$3.5 million to Sierra Pacific, NV Energy's Northern Nevada company, to exit as a retail customer.

Caesars would become the third large gaming company in the state to leave in recent months if the exit agreement is approved. The company said it is prepared to leave NV Energy as soon as Sept. 1. This would include Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline.

Read the whole story

Impossible to get abortion in Tahoe-Truckee

By Kathryn Reed

Legality is one thing; availability is another when it comes to abortions.

No practitioner performs the procedure in the Lake Tahoe Basin or Truckee. There is one provider in all of Northern Nevada and they are in Reno. Sacramento or Roseville are the closest options in California for those living in the Tahoe-Truckee region.

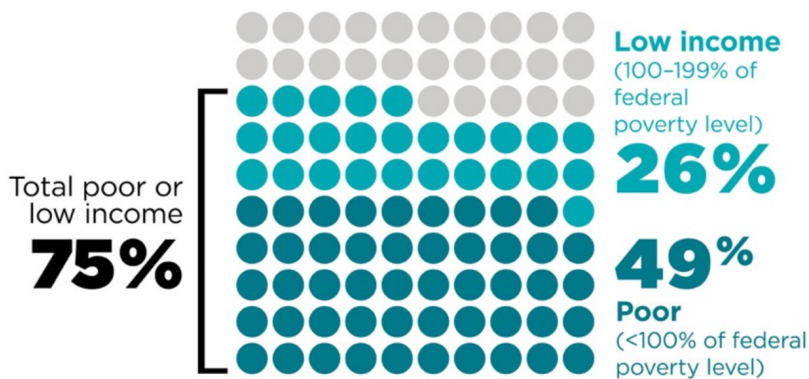
Norma McCorvey, who led the fight that culminated in the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortions in the United States, died Feb. 18 at age 69 from heart failure. She was the Roe (Jane Roe) in Roe v. Wade. Up until that court ruling abortions were only legal if the woman's life was at risk.

In the 44 years since that decision there have been continued attempts to take away a woman's choice.

There was a time when clinics were bombed and protestors would get in the face of women seeking services. This led to many doctors saying no to offering the procedure.

Now with the threat of those rights being taken away women are starting to fight back. Reproductive rights were a rallying call for many of the millions of women who marched last month, the day after Donald Trump's inauguration.

Abortion patients are disproportionately poor and low income



guttmacher.org

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Abortion is a divisive subject, with politics and religion seeming to override all medical discourse.

One of President Trump's first acts in the Oval Office was to sign an executive order banning aid to foreign entities that provide abortions. In the U.S. it is near impossible to get Medicaid to pay for an abortion. Funding to Planned Parenthood is threatened with Republicans controlling both houses of Congress even though less than 3 percent of the agency's services are related to abortions. Planned Parenthood in 2014 performed more than 30 percent of the abortions in the United States.

Planned Parenthood in Reno has not offered abortions since July 2015 because no doctors would be part of the practice.

"It is a frightening landscape we are looking at," Daela Gibson with Planned Parenthood in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It is getting more difficult for women to get health care and it is definitely going to get more difficult if the current

administration continues on this path.”

West End Women’s Medical Group in Reno is the only place in Northern Nevada that provides abortions. They would not provide stats to *Lake Tahoe News*, but the agency has to give them to the state.

According to the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, from 2011-14 there were 141 reported abortions in Northern Nevada, with 3.2 percent of the women coming from the Tahoe area. Statistics are kept by ZIP code. In that time period women from Crystal Bay, Glenbrook, Zephyr Cove, Stateline, Incline Village, Carnelian Bay, Homewood, Tahoma, Kings Beach, Tahoe City, Tahoe Vista and South Lake Tahoe received an abortion at West End.

Those from California going to West End must pay cash – more than \$700. This can be cost prohibitive for many.

California Department of Public Health did not return multiple calls.



One of several signs about women's reproductive rights at the bistate women's march on the South Shore on Jan. 21. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting to Sacramento can be a logistical obstacle, especially for younger girls. (In California parental consent is not required to get an abortion.) There are different procedures, with the number of weeks a woman is pregnant determining what is done. Sometimes a follow-up visit is required, which compounds the difficulty for some people.

Income is another hurdle in the quest to terminate a pregnancy.

"Nearly half of abortion patients in the United States are poor and another 26 percent are low income," according to the Guttmacher Institute, a leading research and policy organization committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States and globally.

The morning after pill is an alternative at least in the first

48 hours after intercourse. While abortion medication is available through the Internet, this is not the route health care professionals prefer. Deciding to get an abortion is an emotional decision with potentially lingering psychological ramifications. Having someone to talk to, to provide counsel, to explain what to expect is part of the process at a clinic or doctor's office.

"We would rather them be under doctor's care or health clinic care and receive guidance instead of trying to handle such a difficult situation on their own," Gibson said.

Abortion related statistics:

- Between 2008 and 2011, 24 states enacted 106 abortion restrictions.
- In 2014, an estimated 926,200 abortions were performed in the United States, 12 percent fewer than in 2011.
- In 2011, there were 1.06 million abortions, and 21 percent of pregnancies were terminated.
- The majority of procedures—95 percent—were accounted for by clinics.
- As of Aug. 1, 2016, 24 states had implemented TRAP (targeted regulation of abortion providers) laws, and these regulations may have affected access to abortion in 2013 and 2014.
- In 2014, a total of 1,671 facilities provided at least one abortion. Abortion clinics accounted for 16 percent of all facilities and 59 percent of all abortions.
- In 2014, five states—Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming—had only one clinic that provided abortion services.
- In 2014, about 90 percent of U.S. counties had no clinics that provided abortion care, and 39 percent of women aged 15–44 lived in those counties.
- More than half of all U.S. abortion patients in 2014 were in their 20s.
- White patients accounted for 39 percent of abortion procedures in 2014, blacks for 28 percent, Hispanics for 25 percent and patients of other races and ethnicities for 9 percent.
- Fifty-nine percent of abortions in 2014 were obtained by patients who had had at least one birth.
- The three most common reasons to seek an abortion—each cited by three-fourths of patients—were concern for or responsibility to other individuals; the inability to afford raising a child; and the belief that having a baby would interfere with work, school or the ability to care for dependents. Half said they did not want to be a single parent or were having problems with their husband or partner.
- Fifty-one percent of abortion patients in 2008 were using a contraceptive method in the month they became pregnant, most commonly condoms (27 percent).
- Most U.S. abortion patients had health insurance in 2014. Thirty-five percent had Medicaid coverage, while 31 percent had private insurance. Overall, 53 percent of abortion patients paid out of pocket for their procedure in 2014.

Source: Guttmacher Institute

For Nichole Delaplante, a doctor with Barton Family Medicine, she talks to her patients about the options and the psychological aspects of abortion. "I give them information where they can safely and privately get an abortion."

Placer, Washoe and Nevada counties provide family planning services. Not so in El Dorado County.

“We need accessible family planning services so abortion does not have to be an option,” Chris Cifelli, a nurse who has been a family planning provider for more than 30 years, told *Lake Tahoe News*. She works in South Lake Tahoe, Truckee and Reno.

Schools offer some assistance to students, but it’s a delicate topic between school nurse and student.

“In Placer county we are very neutral about women’s health choices. We work with people to help them figure out if we have resources to help them or if they need to get somewhere else,” Maureen Bauman, with Placer County Public Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While Barton Community Health Center is listed as a referral by El Dorado County Public Health, the center does not do abortions, and never has, according to an employee.

Barton Health would not provide any historical numbers for abortions, and instead told *Lake Tahoe News* to check with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for stats.

CDC’s response was, “California does not report data on abortions to CDC, so we do not have state-specific data to offer.”

When presented with that information, Mindi Befu, chief spokeswoman for Barton told *Lake Tahoe News*, “Barton respects the privacy and confidentiality of its patients and community and does not release this information.”

Discussing abortion with Barton’s public relations folks was difficult, with few direct answers given. But stats about births, those are available and easy to come by.

Barton flacks didn't even know doctors affiliated with the hospital don't perform abortions any more. There was a time when Barton docs would do them in their offices, but that doesn't happen anymore. (A doctor in Truckee performed abortions years ago in his office, too.)

When abortions were performed at Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe it was for medical reasons.

With Barton employing most of the doctors on the South Shore, as opposed to there being independent offices – which was the case even five years ago, the conglomerate has a monopoly on the local medical profession and can dictate (even if it's not in writing) policy.

"We don't have any providers. Either they are not trained or they don't want to (perform abortions)," Barton Family Medicine's Delaplante told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Report paints bleak picture for Nev. special-needs students

By Ian Whitaker, Las Vegas Sun

Students with disabilities in Nevada face tough odds when it comes to advancing through grade school and college, according to a new report.

The report, put out this month by the Guinn Center for Policy Priorities, calls attention to some stark numbers for the

state. In the 2014-15 school year, a quarter of students with disabilities graduated statewide, and of those who graduated, only a quarter had enrolled in college within a year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Silver State stands in stark contrast to the rest of the country, where around 63 percent of special-needs students graduate each year. But that's far from success, the report notes: Students without disabilities are around 20 percent more likely to graduate than their classmates with special needs.

Read the whole story

Casinos have no fix for slot machine cheat

By Brendan I. Koerner, Wired

In early June 2014, accountants at the Lumiere Place Casino in St. Louis noticed that several of their slot machines had—just for a couple of days—gone haywire. The government-approved software that powers such machines gives the house a fixed mathematical edge, so that casinos can be certain of how much they'll earn over the long haul—say, 7.129 cents for every dollar played.

But on June 2 and 3, a number of Lumiere's machines had spit out far more money than they'd consumed, despite not awarding any major jackpots, an aberration known in industry parlance as a negative hold. Since code isn't prone to sudden fits of madness, the only plausible explanation was that someone was cheating.

Casino security pulled up the surveillance tapes and eventually spotted the culprit, a black-haired man in his thirties who wore a Polo zip-up and carried a square brown purse. Unlike most slots cheats, he didn't appear to tinker with any of the machines he targeted, all of which were older models manufactured by Aristocrat Leisure of Australia. Instead he'd simply play, pushing the buttons on a game like Star Drifter or Pelican Pete while furtively holding his iPhone close to the screen.

[Read the whole story](#)

Severe weather to return to Tahoe-Truckee



Traffic on Highway 50 near Logan Creek remains one lane in each direction because of falling boulders. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

The f-word is returning – flooding.

That's the threat from Mother Nature with the next storm that should bring moderate to heavy rain to the area starting Monday night and extending into Tuesday afternoon. A winter storm warning is in effect from 10pm Sunday through 4am Tuesday.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the snow levels will fluctuate between 6,000 and 7,500 feet. It will be a mix of rain and snow over Sierra passes, making driving precarious. This could make the holiday exodus even more

problematic on Monday.

A flood watch has been issued for the basin and Truckee from 1am Feb. 20 to 10am Feb. 21.

“A strong atmospheric river will bring heavy rain with high snow levels. Moderate to heavy rain and snow melt below 7,000 feet will contribute to increasing flows on rivers and streams with an enhanced flood potential late Sunday night through Tuesday morning,” the National Weather Service said. “The highest risk of flooding is along creeks, streams, and poor drainage areas, including the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe. Rivers such as the Truckee and the East and West Forks of the Carson will see appreciable rises, but at this time are expected to remain below flood stage.”

Sand bags are available throughout the region at the same locations they’ve been at all winter.

Highway crews in California and Nevada will be keeping an eye on the already unstable hillsides. This moisture has the potential to bring more debris onto roads, and therefore close highways until they are cleared.

While all roads in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin are open now, that can change rapidly. Follow Caltrans or NDOT for the most up-to-date information, or click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

High hazard Nev. dams lack

emergency plans

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Of more than 150 dams in Nevada that could cause loss of life if they failed, about 14 percent lack emergency plans, according to a national dam safety database.

Dam safety surged into the spotlight last week when crumbling spillways near Oroville, Calif., prompted the hasty evacuation of nearly 200,000 people.

Oroville showed how quickly confidence in even some of America's mightiest pieces of infrastructure can crumble during a crisis.

Read the whole story

Hospitality jobs require tech know-how

By Julie Weed, New York Times

The front desk manager or housekeeper may epitomize the hotel employee, but the hospitality industry is increasingly dependent on tech workers, vacuuming data scientists, web designers and other experts into its ranks.

More than ever, guests look to their phones and computers to research, book, stay in and communicate with hotels. That translates to critical technology needs in information security, mobile development and systems integration.

Inside hotel operations, data analysis can help find new customers, make a dining room more profitable or provide information to executives making business decisions.

Kate Walsh, interim dean of the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell, says she is seeing more companies coming on campus to hire students who are specializing in areas like digital marketing and business analytics. "They want foodies who code," she said.

Read the whole story

Probe: Nev. cut staff for prescribed burn turned wildfire

By Scott Sonner, AP

An independent investigation into a smoldering prescribed burn that sparked a Nevada wildfire and destroyed 23 homes found several questionable practices at the state forestry division, including understaffing despite repeated warnings about unstable, windy weather.

The state of Nevada late Wednesday ordered the review made public on the fire that started Oct. 14 by lingering embers that spread in the Washoe Valley between Carson City and Reno.

"With knowledge of the impending wind event, staffing continued to decrease on the two days prior to the escape," according to the report overseen by the Phoenix National Incident Management Organization.

It concluded that repeated requests from Washoe County and others to halt the operation due to deteriorating air quality and weather conditions were either ignored or failed to make their way up the line of command at the Nevada Division of Forestry.

In addition to failing to adequately monitor mop-up efforts on the burn, the report cites a lack of documentation for certain training requirements for some fire department personnel. In some cases, a "burn boss trainee" who was reporting to the "burn boss" improperly checked off on conditions necessary to ensure safety despite the fact wind speeds and relative humidity outside the approved parameters.

The burn boss and trainee specifically discussed the forecast for high winds the day before the fire escaped.

"Based on the limited amount of heat near the control lines, success of the current mop-up effort and the risk to firefighters working in timber during high winds, the decision was made to not staff the prescribed fire in the night of Oct. 13," the report said.

Other findings include:

- a daily risk analysis that identified hazards and mitigations was not done for the prescribed fire
- the smoke management and air quality plan was insufficient to effectively minimize negative impacts
- a review of the "complexity rating" assigned to the project "revealed that a few elements might have been underrated," including "management organization" and "public and political interest."

Gov. Brian Sandoval said he would discuss the findings with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources overseeing the Division of Forestry.

"Bringing in an outside professional perspective was an

important step in understanding how this tragedy occurred,” he said. “Once again, I would like to express my heartfelt sorrow to the victims of this tragic event and my sincere gratitude to the first responders and firefighters who battled this intense and shocking event without injury or loss of life.”

The actual prescribed burn that began on Oct. 4 was done “slowly and cautiously and was well staffed” with more than 100 personnel, the report said. But the next day, humidity levels fell below the approved parameters and smoke started to impact Incline Village at Lake Tahoe where it wasn’t anticipated.

Late that afternoon, the Washoe County Air Quality Management District “expressed concerns with air quality and asked the burn boss not to burn on the next day.” The report said the burn boss stated he did not recall that Oct. 5 conversation.

The operation continued Oct. 6 despite humidity levels, wind speed and direction outside the parameters. County officials told the burn boss that day “conditions were not favorable to continuing burning,” and then spoke directly to the state forester on Oct. 7 in an attempt to “compel NDF to cease burning,” the report said.