

Nev. in program to reduce prison solitary confinement

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — Nevada is one of five states that were chosen to work with the Vera Institute of Justice on ways to reduce the use of solitary confinement in the state prison system, the Department of Corrections said Tuesday.

“With Vera’s assistance, Nevada will be better-equipped to both reduce reliance on segregation and improve the ways it is used, with the goal of preparing inmates for success when they return to our communities,” James Dzurenda, director of the Nevada Department of Corrections, said in a statement. “This opportunity is directly in line with the mission of the department, will encourage positive development and needed reform, and will boost safety inside and outside prison walls.”

Nevada’s prison population, estimated at 14,000, ballooned beyond projections in recent years.

Read the whole story

Rate hike on Jan. 1 for Liberty Utilities customers

It’s going to cost Liberty Utilities customers more to keep the lights on and heat their homes and offices starting Jan. 1.

Average residential and small commercial customers will see an increase of less than 1 percent, while average medium and large commercial customers will see increases of approximately 16 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

An average residential monthly use is 602 kWh, average small commercial is 1,843 kWh, average medium commercial is 22,391 kWh, and average large commercial is 196,726 kWh.

The rate adjustment are the result of two major projects:

- Luning solar project is a 50 MW solar installation located in Mineral County in Nevada. Once it is put into service in first quarter of 2017, it will supply about 25 percent of Liberty customers' energy needs.
- The first phase of the 650 electric line upgrade was completed this fall. It consists primarily of upgrading and replacing an aging power line between Truckee and Kings Beach to improve reliability.

Other system improvements were made in Alpine and Mono counties, as well as the Portola area.

Liberty's annual investment of \$2.5 million in vegetation management also contributed to the overall rate increase. Projects include trimming trees and branches around structures to reduce outage and fire-related risks.

For more information about the rate increases, go **online**.

Trump presidency could be

huge for gaming

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

A leading association for the gambling industry is hopeful that a Trump administration will be huge for gaming.

Increased mainstream acceptance of gambling, combined with the results of the presidential election, represent an opportunity to push key goals for the industry on a wide range of issues, including regulations and sports betting, said Geoff Freeman, president and CEO of the American Gaming Association, during a Tuesday conference call with media.

“We have a former casino owner elected as the next president of the United States,” Freeman said. “We are better positioned than at any time to achieve our objectives.”

Read the whole story

Driverless trucks tested in Nevada



Otto test-runs an 18-wheeler on
Interstate 80 outside Reno.
Photo/Otto

By Dan Michalsky, Las Vegas Sun

Founded by a group of former Google engineers, self-driving trucking startup Otto blazed through Nevada in 2016 and left behind some serious tread.

Otto launched in January, and by May the San Francisco-based company had conducted the first-ever test run of an 18-wheeler, on an interstate outside of Reno, with no one on board.

The company heralded the drive as a huge success in a video posted on YouTube, and three months later Uber bought Otto for \$680 million.

But the historic ride may also have been the first moving violation committed by a driverless vehicle in Nevada.

Read the whole story

TRPA leaders worried about transportation

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – While there are 178 thresholds the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is trying to achieve, it was traffic-transportation that garnered the most discussion this month.

The Governing Board adopted the 2015 Threshold Evaluation Report at its meeting last week. Within all of those standards are nine categories: air quality, water quality, soil conservation, vegetation, fisheries, wildlife, scenic resources, noise, and recreation.

“We need to start formulating a traffic management standard to get a handle on this. We need to understand how traffic works,” board member Clem Shute said.

Vehicle miles traveled – or VMT for short – is what TRPA and many other entities use when it comes to traffic. This was originally devised as an air quality tool. It’s a traffic count method.



Traffic at Camp Richardson on July 3, 2016. Photo/Bill Kingman

Board member Jim Lawrence is not convinced VMT should be used for all things the agency uses it for. He said transportation is too important to rely on one metric that might not be doing the job everyone says it does.

Executive Director Joanne Marchetta agreed that a better understanding of VMT is needed.

Anyone who drives in the basin knows traffic can be an issue. During peak periods with tourists it becomes a problem.

And anyone who tries to ride the bus, especially on the South Shore, knows it's not reliable and certainly doesn't come at frequent intervals. For those don't know what a BlueGo is, they wouldn't even know where the bus stop is because all it says is BlueGo – no bus symbol, not even the words “bus stop”.

Austin Sass, who is South Lake Tahoe's rep on the TRPA board and the Tahoe Transportation District, believes the Governing Board should have better communication with the TTD board and staff.

“We need funding for free transportation,” Sass said.

TTD's proposal to achieve that goal is a regionwide sales tax increase dedicated to transit. Before voters could weigh in on this it will take both state legislatures to agree to it.

These threshold reports are compiled every four years by TRPA. Just like in 2011, this report was peer reviewed by 15 independent scientists. They found 77 of the standards to be in attainment, either at or better than target or considerably better than target. That's up from 58 that were in attainment in 2011.

The report states, “Status continued to improve for water clarity, air quality, scenic and soil conservation. Areas needing continued focus include removal of land coverage on sensitive lands, new threats to forest vegetation, deep water plant communities, and the need for continued emphasis on water quality conditions (for) macroinvertebrates, periphyton (algae) and AIS control.”

Board members voiced concern that there are too many thresholds and wonder if looking at what is being evaluated should be a priority. This way staff time could be better concentrated on issues that are relevant and not just doing

something because the Compact says to.

Updating the threshold standards is a priority of staff. It's something that has not been done since they were adopted in the 1980s.

Brown refuses to be bullied on climate change

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown, rallying a room of scientists with his most heated rhetoric yet on the topic, suggested California would defy the federal government should President-elect Donald Trump impede the state's efforts to thwart climate change.

"We've got the scientists, we've got the lawyers and we're ready to fight. We're ready to defend," he said to boisterous applause at the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco.

Brown struck a more forceful tone than he has since the election, suggesting the energy and enthusiasm in the room for him would be needed in the "battles ahead."

Read the whole story

Amodei hopes ties to Trump helps Nevada

By Zac Mooney, KTVN-TV

Rep. Mark Amodei, D-Carson City, was one of Donald Trump's biggest Nevada supporters during the presidential campaign and he says he will use any favor with the new administration to help Nevadans.

He says when the next congressional session starts Jan. 3, the top priorities will be tax, health care and immigration reform.

"I'm looking forward to, 'Here's what the actual proposal is. Where are we at on this? Do we support it, are we opposed to it?'" says Rep. Amodei, "But at least to take it out of the whole speculation of the unknown stuff right now, which is serving to do nothing except heighten people's fears."

Amodei says Trump won the election because the American people want strong leadership. He blames both sides of the aisle for gridlock in Washington and what he calls "political cliché" adding that if the Republican Party can't prevent gridlock, voters will move back to Democrats or even a third party.

Read the whole story

Study: Mortality rates higher

in cold weather than hot

By Jane E. Brody, New York Times

Most of the Northern Hemisphere is now in the throes of the deadliest time of the year. Cold kills, and I don't mean just extreme cold and crippling blizzards. I mean ordinary winter cold, like that typically experienced, chronically or episodically, by people in every state but Hawaii from late fall through early spring.

While casualties resulting from heat waves receive wide publicity, deaths from bouts of extreme cold rarely do, and those resulting from ordinary winter weather warrant virtually no attention. Yet an international study covering 384 locations in 13 countries, including the United States, found that cold weather is responsible, directly or indirectly, for 20 times more deaths than hot weather.

Over time, milder winter temperatures are likely to result in fewer cold-related deaths., a benefit that could outweigh a smaller rise in heat-caused mortality. In winter in the United States, mortality is generally 10 percent to 15 percent higher than on typical summer days.

[Read the whole story](#)

Nev. marijuana industry urges strict testing

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's cannabis industry wants to be tested.

Hoping to avoid the pitfalls seen in other states that have legalized marijuana, several in Nevada's marijuana industry want the state's stringent testing of medical marijuana products to be carried over to the recreational market. Doing so is essential to protecting the consumers, they say, as well as the industry.

Nevada requires medical marijuana products be tested by independent laboratories for pesticides, microbial bacteria, mycotoxins and heavy metals, as well as for the level of THC potency, on a regular basis. That type of regulatory barrier is seen in only a handful of the 28 states with legal forms of marijuana. Some of those states, like Arizona, Michigan and Rhode Island, have no testing requirements for medical marijuana.

Read the whole story

EDC has money to remove hazardous, dead trees

El Dorado County received approximately \$200,000 from CalFire to help low income senior citizens remove dying trees that endanger their residence.

Specifics about the program will come in February when the county receives the money. The dollar amount is the maximum the county could have gotten from the state agency.

Another \$868,840 was obtained by the county from various organizations like fire safe councils, utility districts, and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to remove dead and dying trees, and perform fuel treatments.

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in March proclaimed a local state of emergency due to pervasive tree mortality. The county has about 512,000 dead trees, of those 200,000 are in the Eldorado National Forest.