

Registered Democrats widen edge in Nevada

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – The number of active registered voters in Nevada reached a record in November, topping 1.5 million, Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske said Thursday.

The latest report shows 40,195 Nevadans registered to vote since the Nov. 8 general election, adding of 2.74 percent to state voting rolls. The deadline to register to be eligible to participate in the election was Oct. 18.

Read the whole story

Measure T lawsuit narrows to Collin v. SLT

By Kathryn Reed

There is now only one defendant in the case initiated by South Lake Tahoe City Councilman-elect Jason Collin in regards to the loop road.

This is the strategy concocted by Collin's attorney.

"He said since the measure passed, it is the appropriate thing to do," Collin told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The lawsuit was filed in July to prevent Measure T from going on the November ballot. It named supporters of Measure T in the filing. Those individuals are now no longer a party to

this legal matter.

“Right now I have no standing to speak because I have been dismissed,” Bruce Grego told *Lake Tahoe News*. As of Friday afternoon he had not decided if he would still attend Monday’s hearing.

In August, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Jim Wagoner ruled that Collin and his attorney did not provide enough reason to remove the question, and essentially said the voters have a right to cast a vote.

Voters approved Measure T, which in essence says voters will get to have a say in the loop road and it won’t all be up to the City Council – assuming the council ever has a vote in the matter.

On Dec. 5 there will be a court hearing in Placerville to decide how to go forward with the lawsuit.

“What we need now is the judge to give it clarity to say what the measure means. I’m not sure if he will do that Monday or if he will set another date to do that,” Collin said.

Ironically, Collin will take the oath of office to be on the South Lake Tahoe City Council a week after the hearing. He will not be allowed into the closed session meetings pertaining to the case.

Tree removal to impact travel on Highway 50

Expect delays on Highway 50 for the next few weeks between Echo Summit and Camino.

Caltrans has a \$3.2 million emergency contract with Doug Veerkamp General Engineering to cut down dead or dying trees along the highway. The project is to address motorist safety.

Thousands of trees have been impacted by the drought and the bark beetle infestation all across California.

Intermittent closures of both lanes of Highway 50 will be required to remove larger trees. These closures will be between 7am and 4pm Monday-Friday. Expect delays of up to 15 minutes.

Squaw Valley contending with tainted water



High Camp and Gold Coast do not have potable water. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

Skiers at Squaw Valley are drinking bottled water and eating

packaged food – at least on the mountain – because the wells are contaminated.

E. coli and coliform bacteria have been detected in the four wells that service Gold Coast and High Camp. As long as no one drinks the water, there is no danger to the public.

The Olympic Valley has three water purveyors. The on-mountain water company is run by the ski resort and is called Squaw Valley Resort 8200. The Mutual Water Company has about 250 residential customers. Squaw Valley Public Service District is the largest, serving about 750 customers – commercial and residential – including the village.

Testing has been going on every day since the issue was discovered in mid-November. Until there are two consecutive tests done 24 hours apart that show no bacteria the water on the mountain cannot be consumed.

“We don’t know the cause for sure,” Wesley Nicks, director of Environmental Health for Placer County, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We have data back to the 1990s on the wells to support there have never been bacteria hits from the aquifer. So it is not a groundwater issue. Anything that gets in the system, of course, has bacteria.”

The resort did extensive work on the water system during the summer. In about a 72-hour window more than 9 inches of rain fell before the entire system was secure. It is believed that is how the wells and new pipes got contaminated. The irony is the existing well-head apparatus was relocated from underground vaults to above-ground secure well-houses, and supply pipelines were replaced in order to diminish risk of surface water intrusion.

A chlorine treatment is being used to flush out the system. One well is clean, but it does not produce enough water to solely rely on it. As of Dec. 1 no *E. Coli* was detected in the three wells that service the restaurants, however low levels

of coliform were measured.

“Until this testing process is complete and the system is returned to normal operation, safe, chlorinated water will be available for hand washing and bathroom use. Clean drinking water has been delivered to Gold Coast for all guest uses. Sanitized water servicing the sinks and toilets should be limited to non-consumptive purposes,” Liesl Kenney with Squaw Valley told *Lake Tahoe News* in a statement.

The packaged food is required because ice made from the water at the restaurants cannot be used for food or drinks, food cannot be washed with that water, and it's not advised to handle food after washing hands with the water at those lodges.

Caesars files paperwork to dump NV Energy

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment is asking state regulators for approval to quit buying electricity from NV Energy, according to a recent filing with the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada.

The gaming giant is the latest Nevada company to seek permission to purchase power on the open market. Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline.

In October, MGM Resorts International and Wynn Las Vegas stopped buying power from NV Energy after paying more than \$100 million in exit fees.

Read the whole story

Eldorado National Forest worker testifies about assault

By Michael Doyle, Sacramento Bee

A U.S. Forest Service firefighter from Eldorado National Forest blew another whistle Thursday on sexual harassment and gender bias inside federal public lands agencies.

Reinforcing claims previously made by many others over many years, fire prevention technician Denice Rice told a House panel of repeated problems facing women, who remain greatly outnumbered by men in the Forest Service.

"Women who report sexual harassment are retaliated against," Rice advised the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. "It is your word against his, and you know the moment you open your mouth to speak up you are committing career suicide."

Rice testified that between 2009 and 2011, her second line supervisor repeatedly harassed her sexually. In 2011, she said, he assaulted her; and then, she said, her life "became a living hell."

Read the whole story

Tax evasion lands EDC man in prison

Briant Benson, 59, of El Dorado Hills, was sentenced Dec. 2 to one year and one day in prison for tax evasion,

According to court documents, during the years 2004 through 2006, Benson failed to file tax returns or pay any personal income tax to the Internal Revenue Service, despite receiving at least \$2 million in income as the president and CEO of multiple medical device companies.

Benson used corporate funds to purchase multimillion dollar homes, buy hundreds of thousands of dollars in jewelry and furniture, and pay for lavish travel accommodations such as luxury hotels, private jets, and limousines. Benson also used corporate funds to pay over half a million dollars in gambling debt.

Benson's failure to report his personal income and pay taxes due and owing on that income resulted in a tax loss of at least \$249,000, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Students can't tell

fake news from real

By Camila Domonoske, NPR

If the children are the future, the future might be very ill-informed.

That's one implication of a new study from Stanford researchers that evaluated students' ability to assess information sources and described the results as "dismaying," "bleak" and "[a] threat to democracy."

As content creators and social media platforms grapple with the fake news crisis, the study highlights the other side of the equation: What it looks like when readers are duped.

The researchers at Stanford's Graduate School of Education have spent more than a year evaluating how well students across the country can evaluate online sources of information.

Read the whole story

Nevada joins federal 'critical habitat' lawsuit

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada has joined 17 other states in a lawsuit challenging new federal rules that expand the definition of "critical habitat" for endangered and threatened species.

Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt announced the filing on Wednesday.

Plaintiffs say the new rules would allow an area to be classified as a critical habitat area even if it is only a potential site for hosting endangered species and none are occupying the land.

Read the whole story

Illicit marijuana grows decimate western wildlife



Illegal marijuana grows in the Sierra Nevada are hurting wildlife.
Photo/Integral Ecology Research Center

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Tony Magarrell isn't very relaxed for someone who just spent a week in the lush backcountry canyons of Lassen National Forest, 165 miles northwest of Reno.

Magarrell, a special agent for the U.S. Forest Service, wasn't there to enjoy roaring waterfalls or abundant wildlife. He was

cleaning up yet another illicit marijuana operation, a job that gives him a front-row seat to environmental wreckage most people will never see.

The bags of trash hauled out by helicopter provided evidence of the damage illicit grows can do to the environment. But the damage goes far beyond the trash left behind.

Both California and Nevada voters have recently approved ballot measures to decriminalize marijuana possession and issue licenses for marijuana businesses. But it's too soon to tell if that will affect illicit grows in the Sierra Nevada and elsewhere. That's because the vast majority of what's grown illicitly is sold through black market channels, which still exist because most states and the federal government still consider marijuana to be illegal.

Read the whole story