

‘Nobody’ matters in Nevada elections

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

In Nevada, nobody is somebody.

The Silver State, being the king of quirk in the nation, has a unique option for those wanting to register a protest vote this election with the “none of these candidates” choice.

It is the brainchild of former Assemblyman and state Sen. Don Mello, a Democrat from Washoe County.

The first time “none of these candidates” won was in 1976 when Nevadans preferred literally no one to both of the Republican candidates for the at-large congressional seat. (The second place winner Don Earhart was crowned the nominee. He lost to longtime Democratic Rep. Jim Santini in a landslide.)

Most recently, it played a role in the 2014 gubernatorial elections. Democrats didn’t care for their candidates for governor and instead picked “none of these candidates.” (Bob Goodman won the nomination, going on to get crushed in the general by incumbent Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval.)

Read the whole story

NHP first state agency

approved to fly drones

By Raven Jackson, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada Highway Patrol announced Friday that it is the first law enforcement agency in the state to fly small unmanned aerial vehicles – commonly known as drones – after gaining approval by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The patrol has begun using small UAVs weighing less than 55 pounds after fulfilling federal, state and local requirements, including education and training, to safely, securely and legally fly the aircraft, Trooper Daniel Marek said at a news conference in Las Vegas.

The UAVs can capture images using a 13-megapixel camera while flying at elevations of between 50 and 400 feet, he said. Marek said the agency refers to the aircraft as UAVs because the public tends to think of drones as weapons, such as the missile-equipped Predators the Air Force and CIA use overseas.

Read the whole story

Liability for Little Valley Fire could be big for Nev.

By Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal

The estimated market value of the 23 homes destroyed in the Little Valley Fire ranged from \$542,000 to \$3.8 million, according to a *Reno Gazette-Journal* analysis of data obtained from the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District on Thursday.

The data suggests the state of Nevada could face a significant liability if investigators confirm the wind-swept blaze started as a result of a controlled burn the Nevada Division of Forestry conducted in the days before the fire started.

The *Reno Gazette-Journal* obtained market estimates from Zillow.com for 18 of the 23 houses destroyed in the fire based on the addresses provided by Truckee Meadows Fire. The value totaled \$26.1 million. The average value of the homes was \$1.4 million.

The estimate did not include the value of the 17 outbuildings that also were lost to the blaze.

Terry Taylor, an independent fire investigation consultant, said that based on his professional opinion, the value of the property loss could exceed \$80 million when outbuildings, vehicles, personal belongings and landscaping is taken into consideration.

Read the whole story

Queen to be hauled onto land before winter



The Tahoe Queen's future is

still being decided.
Photo/LTN file

Crews are working on the Tahoe Queen to make it ready for winter.

The paddle-wheeler sustained extensive damage Aug. 16 when it caught fire. Welders and painters were working in the same vicinity when flames erupted.

A yellow boom still surrounds the vessel. This is just precautionary, according to officials.

"We were taking steps to further secure the vessel, given the change in seasons, with plans to move it to dry dock in a few weeks," Dave Freireich, spokesman for Aramark, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It will sit in the parking lot until Aramark decides what to do with it. A decision about whether it will be salvaged or scrapped is not likely to be made until it is out of the water.

Aramark owns the boat. It is still tied up to the dock at Zephyr Cove and has not moved since the fire. Even though Aramark has a permit to operate the boat out of Ski Run Marina it has not been there for more than a year because of the low lake level.

"The salvage company has been in contact with TRPA about getting the Tahoe Queen out of the water, and staff are working out the details of how that would happen, but nothing has been decided yet," Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Tahoe Keys Marina is likely where it will be pulled out of the water.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

EDC voters still waiting to get mail ballots

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

Some El Dorado County voters have inundated their elections office with calls after not receiving mail ballots for the Nov. 8 election.

Registrar of Voters Bill Schultz said the problem lies with the U.S. Postal Service, since his office mailed the ballots Oct. 11-14. That means USPS has failed to deliver some of them within 10 days.

Schultz said he thinks the delays are due to the volume of mail – his office sent about 70,000 ballots – and because of the way the Postal Service distributes mail. USPS hauls the ballots down Highway 50 to West Sacramento for sorting before delivering them back up in El Dorado County.

[Read the whole story](#)

Watchdog raises concern over Caesars creditor deal

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

A lawyer for the U.S. government's bankruptcy watchdog raised concerns in court on Wednesday over Caesars Entertainment

Corp's \$5 billion creditor deal to push its main unit out of Chapter 11, even as hold-out creditors appeared closer to backing the agreement.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc. (CEOC) filed for bankruptcy in January 2015 amid allegations by creditors that its parent had looted the unit of its best assets, leaving it with \$18 billion of debt.

Las Vegas-based Caesars reached an agreement with creditors last month that includes a \$5 billion contribution to CEOC's reorganization plan in exchange for releases from billions of dollars in legal claims.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

Read the whole story

NV Energy proposes Jan. 1 reduction for N. Nev.

By Reno Gazette-Journal

NV Energy has reached a settlement agreement with the Regulatory Operations Staff of the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada, Bureau of Consumer Protection, and a number of other entities to lower prices for customers in Northern Nevada starting Jan. 1, 2017.

The agreement follows the June 2016 filing of NV Energy's required triennial general rate case and is subject to Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) approval.

Read the whole story

Limited warming room to operate in Truckee

Truckee officials are in the process of ensuring the Church of the Mountains in downtown Truckee operates as a warming shelter this winter.

Truckee Town Council next week is expected to approve the second reading of an amendment to allow the temporary shelter to operate. It could then open 30 days later.

The permit stipulates that the shelter can only operate when temperatures drop below 15 degrees or more than a foot of snow in the forecast.

Last year 28 people and four dogs took advantage of the warm room.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Winter outlook not good for California

By Seth Borenstein, AP

Federal forecasters predict this winter may paint the U.S. in stripes of different weather: Warmer and drier than normal in

the south, and colder and wetter than usual in the far north.

The National Weather Service winter outlook , issued Thursday, gets murky in the nation's middle belt, with no particular expectation for trends in temperature or precipitation.

Still, some nasty storms might make the winter there memorable, said Mike Halpert, deputy director of the weather service's Climate Prediction Center.

The major driver of the winter forecast is a budding La Nina, a cooling of the central Pacific that warps weather worldwide and is the flip side of the better-known El Nino, Halpert said.

For the South and California, "the big story is likely to be drought," Halpert said.

And that's not good news for California, which is in year five of its drought. The winter is the state's crucial wet season when snow and rain gets stored up for the rest of year. Halpert said the state's winter looks to come up dry, especially in Southern California.

"It's probably going to take a couple of wet winters in a row to put a big dent into this drought now," said weather service drought expert David Miskus. He said it will take "many, many years and it's got to be above normal precipitation."

The northern cold band that the weather service predicts is mostly from Montana to Michigan. Maine is the exception, with unusually warm weather expected.

The prediction center's track record on its winter outlooks is about 25 percent better than random chance for temperature and slightly less than that for precipitation, Halpert said.

Private weather forecasters are predicting quite a different winter. They foresee a harsher one for much of the nation, including a return of the dreaded polar vortex, which funnels

cold Arctic air into the U.S.

Judah Cohen of Atmospheric and Environmental Research in Lexington, Massachusetts, forecasts an unusually cold winter for the eastern and middle two-thirds of the nation, especially raw east of the Mississippi River.

Cohen, whose research is funded by the National Science Foundation and closely followed by meteorologists, links North America's winter weather to Siberian snow cover in October.

He agrees that Maine will have a warm winter, and also predicts a warm Southwest.

The private Accuweather of State College, Pennsylvania, calls for frequent storms in the Northeast, early snow in the Great Lakes, bitter cold in the northern tier and occasional cold in the middle. Like other forecasters, it predicts a warm and dry southwest, with some hope for rain and snow from San Francisco northward.

Safety driving Meyers roundabout, Echo bridge

By Kathryn Reed

By the end of the 2020 construction season motorists should be driving over a new bridge near the top of Echo Summit and through a roundabout in Meyers.

Caltrans on Thursday night spent a couple hours telling the more than 30 people at an informational meeting about the two projects.

The bridge is needed to replace the one built in 1939. It's located 7 miles west of South Lake Tahoe. It is crumbling, rebar is showing, steel is rusting and structurally it is unsound.

Today it has three spans; in the future it will be one. Travel lanes will go from 11-feet to 12-feet wide.



Clark Peri, Caltrans project manager, talks Oct. 20 about the Echo Summit bridge project. Photo/LTN

Three alternatives plus a no build are being studied, with comments on the environmental documents being taken until Nov. 3 (Details are **online**.)

The cost ranges from \$6.5 million to \$8.2 million.

What concerned some in attendance is that with all of the alternatives the highway would have to be closed for at least 10 consecutive days. Johnson Pass Road will be accessible with a permit, otherwise most people will be getting to western

destinations going Highway 89 to Highway 88. At other times there will be one-way control.

In 2011, the highway over Echo Summit was closed for the retaining wall replacement. A Caltrans official on Oct. 20 said during that time it's estimated the South Shore lost \$1 million a day. With tourism rebounding, the economic impact could be even greater this time.

The bridge project is expected to take place in 2019 and 2020.

Public outreach will be part of the protocols.

Alternative 2 calls for a little wider roadway so a bike route could be added. Alternative 3 would have the cast done onsite.

Caltrans looked at repairing the bridge instead of replacing it. It was determined this would cost more money, and with the possibility of unknown issues arising, this could add to the expense and time to complete the project.

A geological study still needs to be completed.

One attendee asked whether building a tunnel had been study; it wasn't.

During the first year of bridge construction Caltrans intends to build a roundabout at the intersection of highways 50 and 89 in Meyers. This discussion was the most heated, with many people flummoxed that it is already a done deal.

Caltrans said the 21 accidents, eight of which involved injuries, between 2007-12 triggered a safety study. A roundabout was determined to be better than adding stop signs or a signal.

What worries Brad Zlendick, battalion chief with Lake Valley Fire Protection District, is being able to get up Echo Summit, particularly in winter. Instead of going through the roundabout, it will be more expeditious to head into oncoming

traffic even though this is more dangerous. He and Caltrans officials agreed to talk more.

The 135-diameter roundabout will be a single lane of traffic. What will be a bit unique is there will be a passing lane of sorts going west.

Pedestrian and cyclist crossings will be incorporated into the design.

On the original maps the legacy tree deemed worthy of protection during the Meyers Area Plan meetings was slated for removal. That is no longer the case. The large Jeffery pine on the southeast corner will not be harmed.

Tom Brannon, deputy director of the local Caltrans district, admitted the backups during peak times are not going to be alleviated with the roundabout. This particular roundabout is for safety, not traffic flow.