

Truckee going after TOT from short-term rentals

A study shows that 412 properties in Truckee that are being used as short-term rentals are not paying transient occupancy tax.

This summer Host Compliance was hired by the town to assess which properties were paying TOT. A short-term rental is considered 30 days or less.

The company said 979 short-term rentals were available in Truckee, with 567 of them paying the hotel tax. Truckee's rate is 10 percent plus another 2 percent for the Truckee Tourism Business Improvement District.

If property owners don't come into compliance this fall, they face penalties and interest.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

U.S. does a poor job predicting extreme weather

By Michael Behar, New York Times

At 11 o'clock on the night of Sept. 29, the National Hurricane Center in Miami posted an updated prediction for Hurricane Matthew. Using the latest data from a reconnaissance aircraft, the center's computerized models led meteorologists there to conclude, in a post on the center's website, that "only a slight strengthening is forecast during the next 12 to 24

hours.” Their prediction proved to be astonishingly amiss: The following day, Matthew exploded from a Category 1 into a Category 5 hurricane, with winds gusting to 160 miles per hour, strong enough to flatten even the sturdiest homes.

This was hardly the first time that United States government forecasters significantly underestimated a storm’s potential.

It’s a situation that deeply troubles Cliff Mass, a meteorologist and professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington. Mass, who is 64, has become the most widely recognized critic of weather forecasting in the United States – and specifically the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which manages the National Weather Service and its underling agencies, including the National Centers for Environmental Prediction, where the nation’s weather models are run. Mass argues that these models are significantly flawed in comparison with commercial and European alternatives.

William Lapenta, who heads the centers, welcomes the criticism: “His job through his blog is quite honestly to provoke people to respond and hopefully take action,” he says. Indeed, Lapenta told me that the National Centers for Environmental Prediction, which directs the National Hurricane Center, might never have obtained additional funding from Congress to buy new supercomputers had Mass not drawn public attention to the center’s inadequacies in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

Read the whole story

Politics could affect ability to attract international visitors

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

RENO – The winner of November's presidential election could determine just how successful Nevada and the United States will be in attracting international visitors.

Will our policies be warm, welcoming and inviting, thus encouraging repeat visits and word-of-mouth endorsements? Or will they be closed, with administrators suspicious of those buying plane tickets to visit the American Southwest?

A panel of tourism experts fielded questions about that last week at the Nevada Governor's Global Tourism Summit at Reno's Grand Sierra Resort.

Lt. Gov. Mark Hutchison, who chairs the Nevada Commission on Tourism, moderated the panel, which made it clear that the outcome of the Nov. 8 election could have a far greater impact on Nevadans' day-to-day lives and their jobs than they may have anticipated.

Read the whole story

Emerald Fire 100% contained;

Hwy. 89 to open



Hazardous trees are keeping Highway 89 near Emerald Bay closed.
Photo/CalFire

Updated 11:41am:

The Emerald Fire that burned 176 acres near Cascade Lake is fully contained.

The cause of the blaze that started about 1:30am Oct. 14 remains under investigation.

No structures were lost.

Highway 89 is expected to open at noon Monday. Traffic will be metered through the fire area. If necessary, Caltrans could close this stretch in the future as repair work and tree removal continues and debris is removed from the highway.

Crews will remain at the scene until the fire is full extinguished and there are no hot spots.

Liberty Utilities is working to full restore power in the burn area. All evacuation orders have been lifted

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Planned Parenthood celebrates centennial, foes bristle

By David Crary, Associated Press

Planned Parenthood's 100th anniversary celebrations this weekend come with a sense of relief for the group that traces its roots to a time when women could not vote and contraception was illegal. The organization, whose services include birth control, sex education and abortions, has survived largely intact in the face of violence, vilification and fierce efforts in Congress and many states to cut its funding.

There's been some adverse impact: In Texas and Wisconsin, for example, some Planned Parenthood facilities closed after the states cut off funding streams. But most of the Republican-led defunding efforts have been thwarted, and multiple investigations related to the disposition of fetal tissue have thus far failed to prove wrongdoing on Planned Parenthood's part.

Meanwhile, the organization has received strong backing from the Democratic Party, including presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, and says support from the public is robust.

"The attacks have only strengthened our resolve," said Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards. "I do believe we are in a stronger place today than a year ago, or five years ago."

Planned Parenthood's foes, who denounce its role as the nation's leading abortion provider, show no signs of relenting. Eleven anti-abortion groups issued a joint statement depicting the 100th anniversary as "a tragic

milestone for our nation and a reminder of the millions of unborn children who will never have a birthday.”

However, opponents also express some frustration at Planned Parenthood’s lobbying and fundraising skills.

“They put themselves in role of martyr while at the same time making money hand-over-fist,” said Kristi Hamrick of Americans United for Life. “The thing they’re really good at is public relations and marketing and making money.”

Planned Parenthood dates its beginnings to Oct. 16, 1916, when Margaret Sanger, her sister and a friend opened America’s first birth control clinic in Brooklyn. It was a challenge to mores and laws of the time, four years before the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

The clinic was raided, and Sanger was convicted of disseminating birth control information. Undaunted, she founded two organizations that later merged to form the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Sanger’s personal legacy is complicated. She opposed abortion – and yet the organization she founded now provides about one-third of America’s estimated 1 million annual abortions. Her views on eugenics and racial issues remain a subject of bitter debate to this day.

Over the decades, Planned Parenthood played pivotal roles in easing laws against contraception, popularizing the birth control pill and setting the stage for the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that established a woman’s right to have an abortion.

Its clinics have been repeated targets of bombings, arson and protests. Last November, a gunman killed three people and injured nine at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado. The man charged with the attack said he acted because of his opposition to abortion.

Threats against the organization escalated in mid-2015 after an anti-abortion group called the Center for Medical Progress began releasing secretly recorded videos alleging that Planned Parenthood sold fetal tissue to researchers for a profit in violation of federal law.

Investigations by several states and congressional panels produced no evidence of wrongdoing, though one probe in the U.S. House remains in progress. David Daleiden, the activist who orchestrated the undercover videos, predicts that the outcome of that investigation will spell the end of Planned Parenthood's "abortion empire."

Planned Parenthood says affiliates in two states continue to donate fetal tissue to medical researchers; they no longer accept any reimbursement to cover the costs of these programs.

The videos rekindled long-running efforts to cut off Planned Parenthood's federal funding, which accounts for about one-third of its annual \$1.3 billion budget. Republicans in Congress finally managed to get a bill to President Barack Obama that would have achieved that goal, but he vetoed it in January.

Across the country, politicians in about two-dozen states have either enacted or proposed measures targeting Planned Parenthood with defunding. In most of those states, the cuts didn't take effect, often because of successful lawsuits filed by Planned Parenthood.

"They're doing the smart thing by going on offense," said anti-abortion leader Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List. "I think there was a lot of damage done to them, but it's a longer struggle than I would like."

Most of the taxpayer money received by Planned Parenthood covers birth control and other medical services for low-income women. By law, federal funds may not be used directly for abortions except in rare cases, but anti-abortion activists

argue that the grants, by covering operational costs, free up other money to provide abortions.

Statistics in Planned Parenthood's annual reports show how its operations have changed over the past decade. The nationwide number of local health centers has dropped from about 850 to about 650; there's been a decline in the number of contraceptive services provided; and the annual number of abortions performed rose from 264,943 in 2005 to 323,999 in 2014.

Cecile Richards said Planned Parenthood is pleased that more women can now obtain effective contraception on their own, without the need to visit a health center. She attributed the increase in abortions to the fact that Planned Parenthood clinics often have been able to remain open in the face of tough state regulations that forced the closure of numerous other clinics.

Looking ahead, what's on Planned Parenthood's agenda?

Long-term, Richards said Planned Parenthood aspires to use technology to get more information and services to clients through digital means. And she expects the client base to change, with more men and transgender people availing themselves of sexual-health services.

Short-term, Planned Parenthood is launching a yearlong program of activism and celebrations to mark the centennial. And its political action fund is deeply engaged in the election campaign, with a \$30 million program that's supporting Clinton, opposing her GOP rival Donald Trump, and targeting Republicans in key Senate races. Trump has endorsed a plank of the GOP platform that says Planned Parenthood should be denied public funding as long as it performs abortions.

If Clinton wins, Planned Parenthood's federal funding will be secure during her term. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois Democrat who supports abortion rights, believes the GOP

campaign against the organization might lose steam as a result.

“I think there will be a winding down of these attacks and a stepping up of the counterattacks,” Schakowsky said. “With a woman in the White House, women will be feeling more empowered, insisting on control of themselves and their bodies.”

Nev. OKs \$300K settlement in patient dumping case

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A state panel last week approved a \$300,000 settlement with an insurance provider that had not paid a claim on behalf of Nevada to settle allegations of patient dumping with the city of San Francisco.

The settlement with the Insurance Company of the State of Pennsylvania, an American International Group subsidiary, was approved by the Nevada Board of Examiners. The company admitted no wrongdoing.

Read the whole story

Legality of home pot delivery scrutinized

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

The evening's first customer emerged sleepy-eyed from the doorway of his apartment near Sacramento State for his marijuana concentrates: 3 grams each of strawberry, banana and pear flavors. He had few words for the delivery driver who handed him a white bag containing the order. Their transaction lasted mere seconds.

The pot-delivery business is booming in California. Using cars instead of dispensary counters, small marijuana startups have proliferated in recent years, serving a diverse customer base that includes homebound medical patients as well as people in communities where dispensaries are banned or few in number.

The estimated hundreds of mobile services for medical marijuana are operating in a largely unregulated sector of the cannabis economy, and state lawmakers and officials in cities such as Sacramento are scrambling to draft rules for the businesses or seeking ways to close them down.

Two leading online pot-consumer sites, Weed Maps and Wheres Weed?, each list 110 marijuana delivery services in Sacramento and nearby communities, including in Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties.

Read the whole story

Cessna overdue; last contact near Lake Tahoe

The pilot of a Cessna flying from Idaho to Sacramento has not been heard from since Saturday.

“The last known position of the aircraft is in a rugged area of the Sierra Nevada mountains southwest of Lake Tahoe,” El Dorado County sheriff’s Sgt. Tasha Thompson said in a press release. “Due to inclement weather ground and aircraft searches were called off.”

Crews hope to resume the search Oct. 17.

The pilot is the only person on board, according to Thompson.

The Sierra and much of California has been hit with nasty weather for several days, the remnants of Typhoon Songda. Snow was falling on the passes Sunday, with rain a constant at lake level. The wind has been ferocious.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Emerald Fire evacuees returning home



This is one of several hazardous trees in the Emerald Fire burn area.
Photo/CalFire

Most evacuation orders in the Emerald Fire have been lifted.

Cascade Properties and Cascade Lake are open only to residents.

The 176-acre fire that started in the predawn hours of Oct. 14 on the South Shore remains at 90 percent contained on Sunday afternoon.

Liberty Utilities has restored power to Cascade Properties, Cascade Lake, Camp Shelly, Camp Concord, Cathedral side of Fallen Leaf Lake, and Taylor Creek Visitors Center.

Highway 89 is still closed around Emerald Bay as crews clear the roadway of hazardous trees.

The National Weather Service in Reno had also issued a flash flood warning this afternoon for the burn area, as it has been raining steadily all day.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Journalist under attack for doing her job

By Lizzy Ratner, *The Nation*

This Monday afternoon, as the sun hits its peak over Mandan, N.D., the award-winning journalist, and host of Democracy Now!, Amy Goodman will walk into the Morton County–Mandan Combined Law Enforcement and Corrections Center and turn herself in to the local authorities. Her crime: good, unflinching journalism.

Goodman had the audacity to commit this journalism on Sept. 3, when she was in North Dakota covering what she calls “the standoff at Standing Rock”: the months-long protests by thousands of Native Americans against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Goodman’s arrival at the main protest site, the Sacred Stone Spirit Camp, was significant. At the time, not a single one of the major broadcast networks had sent a reporter to cover the Standing Rock mobilization; none had even bothered to mention it on the air.

Yet, on Sept. 8, Goodman received the news that Morton County, N.D., had issued a warrant for her arrest. The charge: riot, a

misdemeanor punishable by jail time and a fine. (It should be noted that the original charge leveled against Goodman was not riot but criminal trespass, also a misdemeanor. However, just days days before Goodman was set to appear in court, the prosecutor, Ladd Erickson, switched up the charges because, he admitted in an email to Goodman's lawyer, Tom Dickson, there were "legal issues with proving the notice of trespassing requirements in the statute.")