

Outside groups spent \$4M more on Nev. races

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Outside political groups reported last week putting another \$4 million into Nevada's U.S. Senate and congressional races, according to Federal Election Commission data available Friday.

The majority of the spending went into the competitive Senate race between U.S. Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev., and Democratic candidate Catherine Cortez Masto, a former Nevada attorney general.

[Read the whole story](#)

Lake Valley offers chief job to STHS grad

By Kathryn Reed

A South Tahoe High School graduate has been offered the job as fire chief for Lake Valley Fire Protection District.

Tim Alameda comes with a wealth of experience, knowledge of the area as well as the issues throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin.

"I'm a firefighters' fire chief. That is my reputation. I really pay attention to the fine details of how they do their job," Alameda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While the board made the offer last week, a contract has not been signed – nor has Alameda even seen one. He's expecting to next week.

Today Alameda is a division chief and the fire marshal for North Tahoe Fire Protection District. He is also the chief for Meeks Bay Fire. North Tahoe and Meeks Bay essentially merged a few years ago, but the latter has a separate administrative structure. The department goes from the West Shore to Kings Beach, so essentially half the basin.

The vacancy at the Meyers-based department came earlier this summer when Gareth Harris was shown the door after five years. He survived two votes of no confidence from his staff, as the board was reluctant to part ways.

Board Chairman Bob Bettencourt chose not to speak with *LTN* about why Alameda was the board's top pick.

Alameda got his start as a firefighter reserve in Meyers in the 1980s. At that time it was a joint program between Lake Valley and South Lake Tahoe fire departments.



1977 South Tahoe High grad
Tim Alameda may soon be fire
chief in Lake Valley.

Starting in 1984 he spent 27 years with Reno Fire Department. He went from a rank and file firefighter to the chief.

He already has connections on the South Shore with newly hired Tahoe Douglas Fire Chief Scott Brown and South Lake Tahoe Battalion Chief Tim Spencer having worked at the Reno department.

In 2011, Alameda retired from Reno. North Tahoe recruited him to be a fire marshal. He took this job seriously – spending many a day walking around his jurisdiction, into businesses and talking to people. He was seeing where the hazards were, listened to concerns and helped educate people.

He rose to division chief and then took over Meeks Bay.

Those in the fire community call Alameda a true professional, forward thinker and good with personnel. Until the ink is dry, people were hesitant to go on the record about Alameda. The same goes for his current boss, Mike Schwartz.

Alameda, 57, did not want to discuss the morale issues at the department, the board, or the past.

Once on board he expects to take 90 days to listen and learn.

“I do know the firefighters are extremely respected. We have had several really bad high angle rescues in Meeks Bay and the Lake Valley guys come over. They are methodical and perfect. It’s amazing what they do,” Alameda said.

He knows board member Bettencourt from his early 20s – Alameda is now 57 – because as a U.S. Forest Service firefighter Bettencourt taught his community college wildland fire class.

Wildland fires are something Alameda is well aware of. He was president last year of the Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Chief’s Association. The wildland urban interface is a constant issue for fire agencies when it comes to protecting the community from a blaze that starts in the forest.

On Wednesday, Alameda is meeting with a forester from the National Forest Foundation, a nonprofit partner of the Forest

Service, to talk about forest fuels in Tahoe.

While he didn't lose a structure during the Angora Fire, a house he and his dad built on Boulder Mountain was destroyed.

"I felt a little bit of that pain," he said.

Those 254 houses that burned in 2007 were part of that wildland urban interface.

He was back in the neighborhood last week with his wife, Lisa. Driving through the burn area is something he does from time to time.

As a kid, he spent many summer days fishing at Angora Lakes or hunting grouse in the area.

Today, Alameda says what free time he has is usually spent with his wife. They have an acre in Nevada with horses and bird dogs. Together they hike a lot. Their two daughters are in the Sparks area; they also have family in South Lake Tahoe.

Power out to swath of South Lake Tahoe

Power is out to about 2,000 customers, mostly in the Al Tahoe area of South Lake Tahoe.

Liberty Utilities does not have an estimated time when the power will be restored.

South Tahoe Middle School has lights. Kids are getting educated; the only thing that is out is the Internet. Lights at the district office, though, are not on.

Randy Kelly with the electric company said that because the utility is in fire mode once the circuit goes out it is not automatically tested. This is because if there is a line down, it could start a fire.

“The guys are required to patrol the line to see if anything laying on the ground. And then they test it,” Kelly told *Lake Tahoe News* on Sept. 13.

This can take some time, which is why there is not estimate of when the power will be restored.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

2 Douglas County toddlers safe after abduction



Hailey and Lucas
Valdez

Updated 9:41pm:

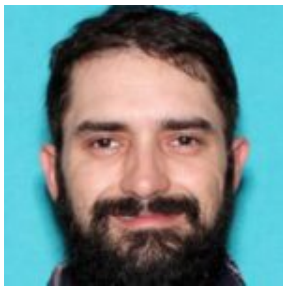
The children were returned to their custodial grandparents by a friend. The children are now safe and unharmed. The suspects are still outstanding.

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The father of two Douglas County children is accused of forcibly abducting them this evening.

An Amber Alert has been activated.

Dason Valdez, 29, does not have any custodial rights to the children.



Dason Valdez

According to Douglas County sheriff's deputies, Valdez entered his parent's residence in northern Douglas County just after 5pm Sept. 12, and physically removed his two children after committing domestic battery on his mother.

The children were placed into a White 2000 Mazda four-door Protégé. The vehicle did not have any license plates. The direction of travel is unknown. The suspects are homeless, according to authorities. Krystal Reid, 27, accompanied Valdez, deputies said.

Valdez is described as white, 5-feet-7, 165 pounds, brown hair and brown eyes, with a full beard. Reid is 5-feet-4, 130 pounds, brown hair and green eyes.

The two children, Hailey Valdez, 4, is white, 3-feet-tall, 30 pounds, dirty blonde hair and brown eyes. She was last seen

wearing a purple top with ruffled sleeves and purple pants. Lucas Valdez, 2, is white, 2-feet, 20 pounds, dirty blonde hair and brown eyes. He was last wearing a blue T-shirt.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Panel sees problems in legalizing recreational marijuana in Nevada

By Raven Jackson, Las Vegas Review-Journal

In November, Nevadans will vote on whether to legalize recreational marijuana – Question 2 would allow adults 21 years and older to possess up to 1 ounce of marijuana legally. On Saturday, a panel of experts largely argued that legalization might be a bad idea.

Earl White, former director of Weed & Seed Program, a crime and drug abuse prevention group, was one of five speakers who met Sept. 10 at the University of Phoenix Las Vegas campus. He was adamantly against legalizing marijuana for recreational use, arguing pot use lessens someone's motivation to study or find work.

“(Nevada is) already last in education and behind in unemployment,” White said. “There is no way that legalizing marijuana is a good thing for the community.”

Read the whole story

Fire near Donner Ski Ranch stomped out

Crews in Truckee have a handle on a quarter acre fire burning west of Donner Ski Ranch.

Air tankers and helicopters made drops on the fire to contain it before crews could get a hose line around it on Monday afternoon. Air tankers are being released and the helicopter will be soon.

Crews will be on scene for the rest of the day mopping up.

The cause is under investigation, however, it is likely the Sept. 12 fire started from a campfire that was not put out well enough, officials said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lukins Brothers – pioneers in SLT water biz

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Lukins Brothers is more than a water company. It's a family. It's a way of life. It's a part of Lake Tahoe's history as well as its future.

And despite the name, a woman runs it.

No matter what Jenn Lukins' title is, she is the face and voice of the South Shore water purveyor. It is very much a family operation, just like it was when it started in the 1940s.

But much has changed in the intervening years. Lukins talked about the history and life today concerning her company during a Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe meeting; she also delved into the history of water on the South Shore.

It wasn't that her great-grandpa Lloyd Lukins intentionally set out to get into the water business. He had a well, neighbors needed water, and he started selling to them.

At one time the family owned several acres on the outskirts of Camp Richardson on both sides of Highway 89. His family lived in what is now Evans Restaurant. Lukins Resort was a thriving enterprise. The cabins people would rent still exist – they are the little white ones used by a Christian youth group in the summer.



Jenn Lukins is carrying on the family tradition of working for the South Lake Tahoe water company. Photo/LTN file

Lloyd Lukins decided to start subdividing the land in the

mid-1940s, selling the land with water.

In 1953, the state awarded Lukins Brothers a certificate to provide water to the 20 seasonal customers. Today the water company has 974 customers; of which more than 80 percent are full-time residents.

Something that Lloyd Lukins did that turned heads at the time was to put in 4-inch waterlines instead of the three-quarter inch that were the norm then. He was a visionary.

Lukins is not the oldest water company in South Lake Tahoe – that distinction goes to Lakeside Park, which started in 1904. It still operates near the state line.

In the early years there were also Globins, Tahoe Sierra, Martin Family, Tahoe Paradise and Tahoe Keys water systems.

South Tahoe Public Utility District started in 1950 as a sewer company with a pump on Ski Run Boulevard. Septic tanks were used prior to that. Now septic tanks are illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

In the next decade South Tahoe PUD bought the Globin water company, and then many of the others.

Today water on the California side of the South Shore either comes from Lukins, STPUD, Tahoe Keys or Lakeside. STPUD still handles all the sewer.

What has changed the most are all the regulations from the state and feds. For Lukins, the California Public Utilities Commission and state Water Resources Control Board are the two big overseers. They control rate increases, water quality, regulate water flow for fires and other aspects of the business. The overriding issues are health and safety for customers.

Contaminants in the water are something Lloyd Lukins didn't have to contend with, but are an every day worry for his

great-granddaughter. **PCE** or tetrachloroethylene was first detected in South Lake Tahoe's groundwater in 1989. Lukins' wells were affected in 2014, though it's not the only water company with PCE. The company is working to put in a filtration system, while the state continues to try to isolate the source.

PCE was a commonly used chemical in dry cleaning and automotive businesses. Lake Tahoe Laundry Works used to be at Y in the Raley's center. That is a known source for PCE contamination right there and had originally been thought to be the source of the plumes below TJ Maxx and Classic Cue.

Climate change is another issue Jenn deals with that Lloyd never had to. While regionally the use of water is declining and aquifer is healthy, it is snowmelt that recharges the underground water. With less snow predicted for the future, at some point the availability of water could become an issue in the basin.

La Niña no longer seen as likely this winter

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

La Niña may not happen after all.

Federal climate scientists on Thursday dialed back their forecast for the influential weather pattern that is sometimes associated with dry years in parts of the Americas, including California – where another winter of scant rain could wreak havoc on the drought-plagued state.

The Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service, projected that the equatorial Pacific probably won't see the abnormally cool temperatures – and the corresponding effects on the atmosphere – that characterize La Niña.

While a La Niña could still emerge this year, its absence leaves a vacuum for forecasters – and fewer clues on whether California will shake free of the drought.

Read the whole story

TTD uses technology to track Tahoe traffic

By Alexandra Spychalsky, Moonshine Ink

Getting anywhere around the lake can be a daunting task on summer weekends. When you're moving so slowly in a car that cyclists are whizzing by you, all you can do is crank up the radio and settle in for a long ride.

As a growing and changing population in Tahoe presents new problems, local agencies are pursuing new technologies to help them better understand our community and its needs. High-tech data collection methods, like those currently being used by the Tahoe Transportation District and Truckee, can reveal trends that were never before quantifiable, and help track compliance with town rules that were previously too difficult to enforce.

TTD seeks to make traveling to and within the basin more efficient and enjoyable. It is now using cell phone data to

gather information on where visitors come from, how they enter the basin, and where they go when they are here.

Read the whole story

Mediator in Caesars bankruptcy case resigns

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

The mediator trying to resolve the \$18 billion bankruptcy of Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc (CEO) abruptly stepped down on Friday, according to a court filing, adding another twist to the complex case.

CEO filed for bankruptcy in January 2015 amid creditor accusations that its parent Caesars Entertainment Corp. and private equity sponsors Apollo Global Management LLC and TPG Capital had stripped it of its best assets.

It was not immediately clear who, if anyone, would take over the role.

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

Read the whole story