

Study: Nevada 48th in health care

By Jose Olivares, Reno Gazette-Journal

The website WalletHub recently ranked Nevada 48 out of 51 in a list analyzing health care in the U.S. in 2016.

According to WalletHub, Nevada is one of the states with the worst health care, ranking last in terms of children with health insurance.

According to WalletHub's findings, Nevada was ranked 41 in health care costs, 45 in health care access, 39 in health outcomes and 48 overall. The Silver State was ranked below Arkansas but above Mississippi.

Read the whole story

Cyclists incensed after bike pedal blamed in Sierra wildfire

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

A lot of things can start a wildfire: lawn mowers, gunfire, smoldering cigarettes. It makes sense in a state dried out by drought.

But the latest culprit – a bike – is largely unheard of as a source of ignition, and is being met with disbelief in some

circles.

U.S. Forest Service investigators say a bicycle pedal that scraped a rock and shot sparks on a mountain bike trail was responsible for a 122-acre blaze in the Eastern Sierra last month, a finding that unleashed a firestorm of incredulity on the Internet.

Read the whole story

Californians saving water, but not as much

By Associated Press

Californians are still saving water despite the recent lifting of mandatory statewide conservation, but not as much as they were last year at the peak of the drought, water officials said Wednesday.

Monthly figures showed water conservation in cities and towns statewide dropped 1 percent in July from the previous month.

July water-savings were down 11 percent from July 2015, which marked peak urban water conservation under last year's mandatory 25 percent statewide cutbacks for cities and towns.

The state Water Resources Control Board began lifting the statewide cutback order in the spring after an El Nino weather pattern brought near-normal rain and snow to Northern California.

Water board member Steven Moore stressed on Wednesday that California households and businesses are still using significantly less water than at the start of the five-year drought, even though the state's population has increased by more than 3 percent since 2013.

"These are promising trends and it's good to place this in context," Moore said.

Drier and hotter Southern California, which gets much of its water from Northern California rivers, marked one of the bigger drops in conservation last month, saving 16.9 percent compared to 28.2 percent in the same month last year.

This year's welcome wet winter filled many state reservoirs, although four-fifths of California remains in drought. State water officials in June turned conservation efforts back over to local leaders, putting them in control of how much water their residents and businesses should conserve, if any.

More than 80 percent of the state's water districts told the water board earlier this summer that they have adequate supplies to handle continued drought and should not be subject to mandated conservation targets.

Officials continue to urge conservation statewide, however, not knowing if this coming winter will begin to erase the extended drought or plunge the state back into the dry spell.

Water officials say they are monitoring monthly water use figures and may adjust conservation requirements after January.

Anti-DUI campaign snares 57 offenders

Fifty-seven people were arrested on driving under the influence charges in El Dorado County from Aug. 19-Sept. 5.

The Avoid the 6 ramped up its usual enforcement efforts, deploying several roving DUI saturation patrols.

“For us, saving one life would make the campaign worthwhile,” District Attorney Vern Pierson said in a statement. “We wanted our community to know that we do not tolerate drunken driving. Our law enforcement was out in full force, pulling over and arresting drivers who were under the influence.”

The enforcement was part of the national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign to save lives and make roads safer.

USFS may buy disputed campground site

Updated 3:29pm

By Kathryn Reed

Plans are in the works to permanently stop all development on a 120-acre site off Highway 267.

What was to become the controversial **Brockway Campground** may remain undisturbed forestland.

Sierra Pacific Industries owns the ridgetop parcel off Fibreboard Freeway. If a deal goes through, the U.S. Forest

Service will be the owners.

In a proposal that was announced Sept. 7, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit plans to buy the property from the timber company. Money to do so would come from the Santini-Burton Purchase Program via the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. This funding source limits what can then be done with the land.

"The reason for buying is to protect it from development," Bob Rodman Jr., lands program manager with LTBMU, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We will not develop it. It will be managed for diversified recreation."

The local USFS branch has already submitted the paperwork requesting the regional office in Vallejo to do an appraisal. The goal is to have all of that done next year, along with completing the purchase.

However, it will be up to SPI to accept whatever offer the feds make. The company could say no and the 282 sites on the resort-like campground could become a reality – pending approval by regulators.

While Mark Pawlicki with SPI said in the long run the campground was likely to make more money for the company, it was going to be years before it became a reality, assuming the permits were granted.

He said the appraisal will be based on the fact that a campground could go there, and does not anticipate the number coming in too low. Pawlicki told *Lake Tahoe News* if a price can't be agreed upon, the campground idea could be resurrected.

An appraisal was done by the California Tahoe Conservancy, which helped bring the two parties to the table. Aimee Rutledge with CTC told *Lake Tahoe News* the appraisal, while paid for with taxpayer dollars, is a confidential document.

Mountainside Partners out of Truckee had wanted to turn the barren land into a high-end campground. This was met with a tremendous amount of **opposition**. That backlash led to this latest turn of events.

“The construction of the Brockway camping resort complex would have set a terrible precedent, as it would have added significant traffic and related pollution to the Tahoe basin. This announcement is also a win for Tahoe’s regional plan, which calls for the concentration of development in the basin’s already existing town centers,” Darcie Goodman Collins, the League to Save Lake Tahoe’s executive director, said in a statement.

While the land has been logged in the past, there are no permanent structures. The Tahoe Rim Trail goes through the parcel. There are also mountain bike and cross country ski trails that tie into Northstar ski resort.

Nev. controller releases wish list for legislative session

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – State Controller Ron Knecht last week released a list of bills he has requested be drafted for the 2017 legislative session, including a measure that would create a hybrid retirement plan for state and local government employees.

Employees would have the option to move into this plan, which Knecht said would diversify their risks and provide them greater freedom and control in their retirement financial

planning. They would not be required to participate in this program, but could not return to the existing programs once they opt into it.

Members of the Nevada's Public Employees Retirement System would have the option to move into this plan. The plan covers nearly all state and local government employees, including educational personnel.

Read the whole story

Outside groups pour money into Nev. races

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Outside groups reported putting \$1.37 million into Nevada election races last week, according to Federal Election Commission data.

The bulk of the money went into the Senate race between Democratic candidate Catherine Cortez Masto, a former Nevada attorney general, and Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev.

Read the whole story

Rabe Meadow fire extinguished

Firefighters on the South Shore were busy again with a

suspicious wildland fire on Tuesday.

By 4pm Sept. 6 the blaze in Rabe Meadow in Stateline was out and crews were in patrol status, according to U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman Lisa Herron.

Investigators didn't immediately have a cause for the 30 x 40 foot fire.

Most of the fires in the past 10 days, which officials believe are the work of an **arsonist**, have been on state or federal property.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. to vote on tax break for wheelchairs, oxygen

By Michelle Rindels, AP

Oxygen tanks, hospital beds, feeding pumps, crutches and other durable medical equipment could be exempt from the Nevada sales tax if voters approve a measure on the ballot in November.

Here are things to know about Question 4:

How does it work?

If the measure passes this year and again in 2018, it will amend the Nevada Constitution and require lawmakers to pass a law exempting durable medical equipment from the state's 6.85 percent sales and use tax. A "yes" vote supports the

exemption; a “no” vote opposes it.

Why now?

Proponents tried to get the exemption passed in the Legislature last year. The bill also waived taxes on hearing aids, glasses and contacts and would have cost the state \$25 million in tax revenue over 10 years, according to Legislative Counsel Bureau estimates.

The state Senate passed the measure, but it didn’t get a vote in the Assembly.

The ballot measure is narrower and excludes hearing and vision aids. Officials estimated in 2015 that Nevada would forgo about \$3.7 million in tax revenue over a decade if durable medical equipment were exempted. But in an official analysis in August, they said they could not determine the financial effect of Question 4’s passage.

A political action committee called the Alliance to Stop Taxes on the Sick and Dying gathered enough signatures to qualify the measure for this year’s ballot. The group is backed by Bennett Medical Services, which sells the equipment that would get the exemption.

What are the pros?

Supporters say sales tax on the equipment is unnecessary and revoking it would have minimal effect on the budget. The tax applies to wheelchairs, infant sleep apnea monitors and oxygen delivery equipment – items used by people in their last weeks of life or need the equipment to live.

Insured patients are feeling the sales tax indirectly through increased copays and deductibles, while residents without insurance must pay the tax out of pocket and could forgo equipment their doctor prescribed because of the cost.

The exemption would apply to equipment including oxygen tanks

and concentrators, which can cost \$639 to \$3,325 before taxes, according to an analysis of popular medical sales websites by Nevada's nonpartisan Guinn Center for Policy Priorities. Wheelchairs cost between \$114 and \$8,800, while hospital beds can cost anywhere from \$585 to \$13,500.

Nevada already exempts medicine and prosthetics from the sales tax. Supporters of Question 4 say the ballot measure would bring Nevada in line with many other states that exempt the equipment from sales taxes.

The Guinn Center lists 23 other states with tax exemptions for medical equipment and notes that about 7 percent of Nevada's population uses such products and would benefit from the tax break.

What are the cons?

Opponents argue the proposal is just another giveaway to a special interest group and say taxpayers are footing the bill. They say sales tax from the medical equipment is funding public services including police, firefighters and public schools and cutting away more revenue will force lawmakers to raise taxes elsewhere.

They also are concerned that the definition of "exempted medical equipment" is vague and up to the Legislature. The lack of clarity makes it hard to tell how much the exemption would cost the state, opponents say.

"On the surface, this exemption seems like a good thing, providing tax relief to those in need," the official opposition argument says. "However, this exemption is really a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Cascade Falls hike ends in tragedy

A 21-year-old man hiking at Cascade Falls on Labor Day died.

“He fell 40 feet and tumbled another 60 feet,” Kileigh Labrado, spokeswoman for Lake Valley Fire Protection District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Her agency was notified about the incident at 4:06pm Sept. 5. She does not know if the victim was with friends or alone.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter extracted the body from the wilderness area on the South Shore.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*