

Former surgeon general calls for pot acceptance

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Joycelyn Elders was never shy about speaking her mind as she consistently stirred public controversy while serving as surgeon general during her spirited – and short-lived – tenure with President Bill Clinton.

Now 82, Elders demurred just a bit when she was introduced Friday night at a reception at the International Cannabis Business Conference, a teeming marijuana politics and industry conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in San Francisco.

She built a reputation as a maverick on marijuana and other public health issues as she irked the Clinton Administration in publicly discussing legalizing drugs, and amid the depths of the AIDS crisis, considering marijuana as an effective medicinal relief.

On Saturday morning, Elders formally opened the weekend marijuana policy conference with a fiery condemnation of America's drug enforcement policies.

[Read the whole story](#)

Presidential campaigns address Western issues

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

Western issues were the focus of the Democratic presidential campaigns Saturday in Reno as a group of grassroots organizations held a summit to address regional concerns about matters like public lands, indigenous tribes and water rights.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders appeared on his own behalf while New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker represented former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the Real Solutions for Real People Summit hosted by several organizations including the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, Acting in Community Together in Organizing Northern Nevada and the Center for Community Change. Around 400 attendees from progressive groups around the state and the community showed up to hear the campaigns. Members of the community asked the questions, including people from the Paiute Tribe, DREAMers and the University of Nevada, Reno.

Western issues had not been at the forefront of presidential campaign stops save for a visit by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush in October recommending Reno as a potential headquarters for the Department of the Interior.

Read the whole story

Bookstores record first rise in sales since 2007

By Tom Kludt, CNNMoney

In the book publishing world, what's old is new again.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that bookstore sales rose by 2.5 percent from \$10.89 billion to \$11.17 billion in

2015, the first such increase in the industry since 2007.

The figures were reported by *Publishers Weekly*, which also noted that eBook sales declined in 2015 while print sales went up.

Read the whole story

Antonin Scalia, Supreme Court justice, dies at 79

By CNN

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, the leading conservative voice on the high court, has died at the age of 79, a government source and a family friend told CNN on Saturday.



Antonin Scalia

His death set off an immediate debate about whether President Obama should fill the seat in an election year. Obama said Saturday night that he plans to nominate a replacement, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the nomination should wait until the next president comes into office while top Democrat Harry Reid called for the seat to be filled “right away.”

Scalia died in his sleep during a visit to Texas. A government official said Scalia went to bed Friday night and told friends he wasn't feeling well. He didn't get up for breakfast on Saturday morning, and the group he was with for a hunting trip left without him.

Read the whole story

More rain, less snow for U.S. winters

By Brian Kahn, Climate Central

For most states in the U.S., winters without snow would be like a Super Bowl performance without Beyonce, Donald Trump without a combover or an overseas flight without a passport.

And yet that's exactly what's been happening. As the world warms, it's changing the essence of winter. It's not that less precipitation is falling (though that is happening in some areas). It's that less winter precipitation is falling as snow, according to a new Climate Central analysis.

Not all winter precipitation is created equal. Less winter precipitation falling as snow is bad news for water supplies and wildfires out West and the financial fate of ski resorts across the country.

Read the whole story

Flu cases expected to increase

By Soumya Karlamangla, Los Angeles Times

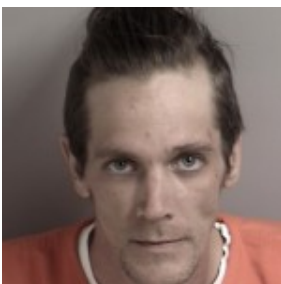
More Californians are falling sick with the flu this month, but the season looks to be far less dangerous than those of past years.

As of the first week of February, 11 Californians under the age of 65 had died from the flu since the season began in October. At this time last year, there had been 25 flu deaths, and two years ago, there were 202.

Health officials say that could be because this year's flu season may peak this month, while the last three seasons peaked in December. February is the most common peak for the flu season, which can continue all the way through May.

[Read the whole story](#)

Guilty verdict in SLT domestic violence case



Thomas Payne

A jury found a South Lake Tahoe man guilty of multiple counts of domestic violence against his wife.

Thomas Edward Payne after three weeks was convicted on two counts of felony domestic violence, as well as a special allegation that he used a deadly weapon and personally inflicted great bodily injury on his wife during one of the attacks. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on the attempted murder charge.

Payne was **arrested Oct. 15, 2014**, after slitting his wife's throat with a knife before fleeing the scene.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 22.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Forest management integral to water issues

By David Benda, Record Searchlight

Two-thirds through Thursday's talk on forests and water yields at the Sierra-Cascade Logging Conference, moderator Jim Ostrowski asked the audience about the governor's mandate for a 25 percent statewide water use reduction.

"Maybe we need to tell the governor we got a better a deal," Ostrowski said.

He was referring to the PowerPoint just given by Rob York, a UC Berkeley adjunct professor who for years has been studying the role of sustainable timber harvesting as way to reduce fire risk, restore the forest and increase water available for

agriculture and residential users.

Reducing the forest canopy cover by 30 percent can mean an extra 6 inches of water, York said.

Read the whole story

Casinos woo millennials with tattoos, martial arts, poker

By Phillip Marcelo, AP

Casinos worried that millennials aren't getting into traditional gambling like their parents and grandparents are bringing in tattoo studios, mixed martial arts competitions and other offbeat attractions to attract a younger clientele.

In New England, where a regional casino war is afoot, Connecticut's Foxwoods is remaking one of its gambling floors – now christened “The Fox” – as a hip, fun scene in the sprawling 30-year-old casino complex.

The casino floor bar was redone in January to include a stage where a mostly female ensemble covers pop songs. Just off the gambling floor, a swank new tattoo studio-slash-fashion retailer opened in the fall, not far from where Shrine, the casino's popular nightclub, is increasingly booking top electronic dance acts like DeadMau5 and Tiesto.

“It's kind of like the party place,” says CEO Felix Rappaport. “It's really energized the casino floor.”

In Rhode Island, the more modest-sized Twin River Casino removed 274 slot machines to make way for more poker and other

table games favored by younger gamblers this past December. It's also been hosting mixed martial arts competitions at its event center, a nod to its popularity among younger fight fans.

Casinos are making the right move to draw in millennials if they're putting fewer slot machines on their floors in favor of table games, said Sunny Chopra, a 25-year-old from Falmouth, Massachusetts, as he considered betting at an electronic roulette wheel at Plainridge Park, a slots parlor and harness racing track in Plainville, Massachusetts.

"I've never played slot machines," Chopra said. "I'm not that old."

Casinos slow to pivot to millennials' preferences do so at their own risk, warned Steven Norton, a casino consultant based in Illinois.

Older members of the demographic are in their 30s, meaning they're entering their prime earning and spending years, he says. That's critical for an industry whose customers have historically been in their 40s and over.

"You want to develop good customers now so that we don't become the horse racing industry of the future, where all of our people have died off and we don't have any new blood coming in," Norton said.

It's too soon to determine whether any of these efforts will translate to sustained success with millennials, casino operators said.

But market research suggests new thinking is necessary, said Michael Mathis, president of MGM Springfield, a \$950 million resort casino expected to open in western Massachusetts in late 2018.

He pointed to a 2015 article by the Washington, D.C.-based

Marketing Research Association suggesting current versions of slot machines are “widely viewed” by millennials as “antisocial, non-intuitive and generally boring.”

To address the slot machine apathy, casinos in past years updated machines with more pop culture references, like Star Wars themed gambling machines. They also introduced electronic version of popular table games.

The newest trend? Electronic table games that feature live dealers.

Casinos are betting the blend of live table game action, easy slot machine-style play and lower minimum bets will appeal to younger and novice gamblers, says Carrie Nork Minelli, spokeswoman at Parx Casino outside Philadelphia, which unveiled a Shaquille O’Neal-themed electronic blackjack game where players are arranged “stadium-style” around a live dealer in late 2015.

Casinos are also increasingly launching “social casinos” – websites where players can play free, online versions of their slot machine and table game offerings for virtual credits that can’t be converted to cash or redeemed.

The hope is that free online play generates paying customers at brick-and-mortar gambling halls, says Mario Maesano, senior vice president of marketing at Maryland Live, which launched a social casino just before Christmas.

At Connecticut’s Mohegan Sun, where millennial-friendly nightlife and entertainment options like Vegas-style pool parties and rooftop concerts emerged almost four years ago, general manager Ray Pineault cautions the need to address the younger generation has to be balanced.

“You can’t over emphasize millennials to the detriment of your other customers,” he said. “They’re still young and have less disposable income than their more established parents.”

Washoe County could have highest sales tax in state

By Trevon Milliard, Reno Gazette-Journal

Washoe County voters found out Friday which tax increase for local schools awaits their decision on the November ballot.

Sales tax.

And voters will likely be asked to pass the highest sales tax in Nevada of 8.265 percent, according to a Washoe committee unanimously agreeing Friday to seek a sales tax increase in the General Election.

Washoe's current sales tax rate is 7.725 percent, falling below the state high of 8.15 percent charged for purchases in Clark County.

[Read the whole story](#)