

Calif. voters to be automatically registered at DMV

By Juliet Williams, AP

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown has approved legislation to make California the second state in the nation to begin automatically registering eligible voters when they obtain or renew their driver's licenses.

AB1461 by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, aims to boost California's voter rolls by registering visitors to the Department of Motor Vehicles and was among dozens of bills that Brown announced Saturday he had signed.

It follows Oregon's move earlier this year to adopt the nation's first automatic voter registration law.

The legislation backed by Democratic Secretary of State Alex Padilla calls for data collected by the DMV to be provided to the secretary of state's office, which would verify a resident's legal eligibility to vote before registering them. Drivers would have the option to opt out or cancel their voter registration at any time.

The legislation was among a package of election and voter bills that Brown signed, including AB 44 by Assemblyman Kevin Mullin, D-South San Francisco, which allows the governor to order a state-funded, manual recount of any statewide ballot measure or elected office in which the margin of victory is extremely small.

Padilla praised the signing of the automatic registration bill.

"Citizens should not be required to opt-in to their

fundamental right to vote,” he said in a statement. “We do not have to opt-in to other rights, such as free speech or due process. The right to vote should be no different.”

Lawmakers approved the so-called motor voter law this summer and have held events around the state encouraging Brown to sign it. They say it could add millions of newly registered voters to California’s voter rolls, improving a lackluster registration system that has led to some of the lowest participation rates in the country.

Some Republican lawmakers say voters shouldn’t be forced to sign up. They warn that automatic registration could lead to voter fraud if people who are not eligible are accidentally registered.

Critics have also argued that merely increasing voter registration will not make Californians more engaged in the political process or interested in voting.

Brown Saturday also announced other bill signings:

- SB707 bans concealed weapons from California schools and universities. It drew renewed attention after a recent massacre at an Oregon community college.
- SB27 gives California the toughest limits in the nation on the use of antibiotics in livestock.

The governor also vetoed nine bills sponsored by fellow Democrats that would have created new tax credits or expanded existing tax credits.

Brown said the state’s budget is still facing financial uncertainties, and the tax credits would make balancing the state’s budget even more difficult.

Calif. bill requires search warrants on electronic data

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation Thursday that will require police in California to obtain a warrant from a judge before searching any electronic communications, including emails, text messages, GPS data and other location information.

Brown's approval of SB178 by Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, followed the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling last year that required officers to get a warrant before searching the contents of cell phones seized from people they arrest.

The new bill, effective in January, goes further by requiring warrants to obtain individuals' electronic data from online hosts like Google and also covers cell-phone tracking information and data stored on other digital devices such as laptops.

Read the whole story

2 die when plane crashes into South Shore house



Firefighters work to contain a fire that was started Oct. 10 when a plane crashed in El Dorado County. Debris from the plane is in the foreground and to the right. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Two people died Saturday night when the plane they were in crashed just after takeoff from Lake Tahoe Airport.

The names of the people and their hometowns are unknown.

El Dorado County sheriff's Sgt. Paul Hadjes told *Lake Tahoe News* the plane had landed at the South Lake Tahoe airport, waited a bit and then took off. The crash occurred about 5:40pm.

The single-engine plane was a Bonanza 35 with a V tail. The tail number was too charred to completely read.

Airport officials on Oct. 10 had yet to listen to recordings of the take off or any chatter after the plane was in the air to ascertain if the pilot radioed any trouble. The airport does not have a tower.

National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration officials will be on scene Sunday. People will be guarding the site all night.



Pieces of the plane are lodged in a tree.

Trees sheered off by the plane are visible behind the house that was hit on Tionontati Street on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe. This is due east of the airport.

One woman said this is not the typical flight pattern planes use to take off from the South Lake Tahoe airport.

While it was windy for much of the day, by dusk it had calmed down. The sky was clear.

The bulk of the debris from the plane was to the right of the house. This is what caught fire. The cockpit was not recognizable.

Other pieces of the plane were in the backyard and some was still high in a tree well above the two-story house.

Roommates Bryce Tye and Matthew O'Hara were on top of Echo Summit when they saw the explosion that cast a large plume of white smoke that was followed by black smoke. They raced home thinking it was their house that was hit, but it wasn't.

One neighbor said the lot is cursed because this is the second time in 10 years a house there has burned.

The two people in the vacation rental escaped with their dog unharmed.

“The guy was sitting in the living room having a glass of wine when they hear what they think is a tree falling. They see fire and thought it hit an electrical line. They look out and saw it was an airplane,” Ginger Nicolay-Davis told *Lake Tahoe News*. She manages the property for the owners who live in Hollister.

The renter was one of the playwrights who was to perform Oct. 10 at Valhalla as part of the WordWave literary festival. He left the house without shoes and didn't make it to the performance.

The extent of damage to the house is unknown at this time.

New regs don't clear all hurdles for pot dispensaries

By Maura Dolan, Los Angeles Times

California's new medical marijuana regulations will likely reduce federal crackdowns in the state, but dispensaries will continue to have difficulty obtaining banking services and deducting business expenses, legal experts and activists said Friday.

The Obama administration has backed off major enforcement actions in states that legalize medical and recreational marijuana, but most dispensary owners still remain at risk of a possible 10-year minimum federal sentence should policies in Washington change.

Marijuana advocacy groups said they were unconcerned about a new administration increasing federal enforcement in the future, particularly against medical marijuana.

California's regulation of medical marijuana also is likely to protect it from federal prosecutions, activists and lawyers agree.

Read the whole story

Mammoth residents to get a vote in VHR issue

By Sierra Wave Media

Measure Z yes votes far outnumbered no votes during the special ballot election Tuesday in Mammoth Lakes.

The yes vote on Measure Z means that if the Mammoth Lakes Town Council wishes to expand nightly rentals into residential zones, the people will have the right to vote on it first.

The semi-official results from the Mono County Elections Department showed 858 "Yes" votes for a 69.87 percent total and 370 "No" votes, equaling 30.13 percent.

Read the whole story

Man pleads in Incline Village homicide case



Joseph John
Personeni

A Sonoma County man is scheduled to be sentenced Oct. 22 in the December 2013 killing of an Incline Village resident.

Joseph John Personeni, 21, of Santa Rosa pleaded guilty to manslaughter. He faces one to 10 years in prison.

On Dec. 22, 2013, Christopher Elliott, 46, was found dead on his porch on Northwood Boulevard in Incline Village. According to investigators, Elliott and Personeni had been arguing and it escalated into a physical confrontation. The cause of death was blunt force trauma.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Forecast: El Niño could help

NorCal ease drought

By Dale Kasler and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

El Niño might put a dent in the drought after all.

In a revised forecast Thursday, the National Weather Service said Northern California stands a decent chance of getting significant precipitation from this winter's El Niño weather pattern, a development that could help ease the state's four-year drought.

Until now, forecasters have been saying this winter likely would bring heavy rains to Southern California, which is typical for El Niño, but they've been less certain about the outlook for the northern half of the state. Because the state's major reservoirs are in the north, that's where the rain and snow need to fall to substantially bolster the state's water supplies.

If history is a guide, California will see big snow in the northern mountains along with rain in the south.

[Read the whole story](#)

How the drought is hurting health

By Deborah Schoch, Center for Health Reporting

Four years of drought in California is wearing on the bodies and minds of the people who live in the San Joaquin Valley.

State health officials say they have not seen anything to link the drought to changes in residents' health. But local doctors and health experts, and a drive south on Highway 99 from Sacramento to Tulare County, tell a different story.

Physicians say they've treated more children and adults struggling to breathe as dust from plowed-over farm fields and wildfires penetrates nostrils and lungs. Mental health counselors report that they're hearing from more residents suffering anxiety and depression, fearing that the drought will cost them their homes, farms and livelihoods. Calls are up sharply at a local suicide prevention hotline.

Read the whole story

Media outlet wins court victory over billionaire

By Monika Bauerlein and Clara Jeffery, Mother Jones

Today we are happy to announce a monumental legal victory for *Mother Jones*: A judge in Idaho has ruled in our favor on all claims in a defamation case filed by a major Republican donor, Frank VanderSloot, and his company, Melaleuca Inc. In a decision issued Tuesday, the court found that Mother Jones did not defame VanderSloot or Melaleuca because "all of the statements at issue are non-actionable truth or substantial truth." The court also found that the statements were

protected as fair comment under the First Amendment.

This is the culmination of a lengthy, expensive legal saga that began three years ago when the 2012 presidential primaries were in full swing. On Feb. 6, 2012, we published an article about VanderSloot after it emerged that his company, Melaleuca, and its subsidiaries had given \$1 million to Mitt Romney's super-PAC. The piece noted that VanderSloot had gone to unusual lengths to oppose gay rights in Idaho, and that Melaleuca had run into trouble with regulators.

VanderSloot's lawyers sent us a letter complaining about the article. We reviewed their concerns and posted a correction about a few details. So far, not an uncommon scenario; it's something every newsroom deals with from time to time.

Read the whole story

California law bans plastic microbeads

By Rachel Abrams, New York Times

Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation on Thursday that bans plastic microbeads, giving his state one of the country's strongest laws against the tiny abrasives used in exfoliators and other products.

The consumer products industry had objected to certain aspects of the bill, arguing that it was overly restrictive and did not allow companies to come up with environmentally friendly alternatives.

The California rules include a prohibition against

biodegradable microbeads, which other states with similar legislation allow.

Read the whole story