Long-public Nevada arrest database made secret

By Alexander Cohen, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A database of Nevada arrest records that was open to public inspection for decades has been made secret by a new state law.

The Nevada Department of Public Safety, which collects the information from law enforcement agencies across the state, won approval of the new law after the Las Vegas Review-Journal requested arrest and conviction records last year.

In May, DPS submitted an amendment to Assembly Bill 76, a measure to update rules for Nevada's main repository of criminal history information such as arrests and convictions. The amendment prohibited releasing to the media any personal identifying information, such as names and dates of birth. The change, which took effect two months ago, allows the disclosure of identifying information only if media requesters ask for the records of a specific person.

Read the whole story

Calif. housing bill has people freaking out

By Matt Levin, CalMatters

Memes of a mild-mannered California legislator photoshopped as a Star Trek villain. A San Francisco supervisor suggesting the

city should sue the state, to “thunderous applause.” Wealthy Marin County homeowners and South Los Angeles tenants’ rights groups working as political bedfellows.

All inspired by a wonky state housing bill yet to receive a single vote—and faces tough odds of passing the Legislature.

SB827, sponsored by state Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat from San Francisco, tries to force cities to build more dense housing around public transit hubs. The bill has received a remarkable level of media attention both within California and nationally, providing fodder for think pieces from *Slate, Vox, Boston Globe, Bloomberg* and *New York Times*—which called it a “bold, divisive plan to wean Californians from cars.”

That attention has only amplified a loud and acrimonious debate over how the bill would transform California cities. Proponents see the bill as a radical and necessary step for the state to solve its endemic housing shortage and meet its ambitious climate change goals. Opponents see it as a blunt overreach of state power that would destroy the character of local communities while displacing long-established residents so developers could build more luxury condo towers for rich people.

Here are four things you should know about California’s most controversial housing bill in decades:

This isn’t hype. If it becomes law, the bill could really revolutionize California cities.

As currently written, SB 827 would essentially exempt all new housing built within half a mile of a train stop or quarter mile of a frequent bus stop from most local zoning rules. So, if a city had zoned an area for single-family homes, developers could invoke the bill to build multifamily apartment buildings between four and eight stories high. It would also free those projects from parking requirements and other zoning rules frequently abused by cities to impede new

development.

How much area in major California cities would fall under the bill? That's what makes this so radical. Preliminary analysis by the San Francisco Planning Department shows that basically all—yes, all—of San Francisco and huge swaths of Los Angeles would lose their local zoning regulations. Ninety percent of San Francisco's residential parcels would have a higher height limit for new development under the bill.

A more rigorous analysis of just how much developers would take advantage of the bill, and how it would apply to smaller California cities, has not yet been conducted. But the potential is huge.

For decades, urbanists across the state have have longed for the type of density SB827 would bring. Despite major push back from some quarters of his home city that San Francisco would become unrecognizable should the bill become law, Wiener has stressed that such density is good for cities like San Francisco, and the most effective way to combat the region's astronomical housing prices.

Many environmentalists love this bill

Proponents of SB827 say it has two primary goals: 1) to increase the supply of housing and thereby lower housing prices, and 2) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

Urban planning academics and climate change activists argue the state can only meet its climate change goals—a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by the year 2030—if it succeeds in getting people out of their cars and onto public transportation closer to where they work. Alternative energy sources and cleaner-burning power plants can only go so far: The leading cause of emissions nationally is the tailpipe. Building tons of housing in major job centers close to good transit seems like a sensible and necessary

solution, they argue.

But at least one prominent environmental group with a tradition of opposing new development has balked at the measure. Angering many climate change activists, California's Sierra Club has argued the bill would only create more local hostility to future transportation projects and would displace low-income residents.

Anti-gentrification groups argue that communities whose residents have lower incomes are much more likely to ride a bus or take a subway to work than commuters who earn more money. If lower-income residents are exiled to the suburbs as a consequence of the bill, its success at cutting carbon emissions will be muted at best.

Anti-gentrification and tenants' rights groups not so much

Advocates for lower-income renters and urban communities of color have greeted SB827 with a mixture of skepticism and hostility. A group of prominent Los Angeles anti-gentrification and civil rights groups signed onto a letter opposing the bill last month on the grounds that it lacked sufficient protections for renters whose apartments could be demolished to make way for newer, bigger, market-rate projects. They also expressed the broader fear that "opening the floodgates" around transit corridors would mean rents around shiny new developments would rise out of reach of current residents.

Wiener has addressed some of those concerns by amending the bill to include fairly strict renter protections. Developers who wish to demolish a renter-occupied unit would have to pay for the moving and living expenses of tenants for more than three years, and renters would have the right to move back into the new development at their old rent.

But the changes have yet to attract broad support from major housing equity groups, who fear the larger gentrification

pressures possibly unleashed from the bill. It also didn't help that backers of SB827 waited until after the bill's announcement to try to court those groups' endorsement.

The bill faces a very tough road in the Legislature—a road that goes through Marin County

Bills that override local zoning control are rarely popular in the California Legislature. Homeowners in many regions of the state are, by and large, not thrilled with the idea of new apartment complexes going up next door over their objections. Homeowners are also more likely to vote than renters—a fact state legislators are acutely aware of.

Cities and counties are stealth power players in Sacramento, and are also not fans of having their zoning power stripped away. Up and down the state, mayors, city council members and county supervisors have come out against the bill, including Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Last year, lawmakers passed a handful of laws that encroached on the traditional zoning power of cities. But that housing package took a herculean effort to enact after years of failure, and importantly included new funding sources for subsidized housing, as well as tenants' protections that attracted support from a wide coalition of housing groups. And the zoning process changes brought by those laws pale in comparison to what SB 827 could do.

Nowhere has opposition to state interference in local planning decisions been as fierce as in Marin County, an affluent northern suburb in the Bay Area. If the bill is to receive a full vote of the Legislature, it will first have to clear a committee controlled by Sen. Mike McGuire, a Democrat who represents Marin. McGuire could prevent the bill from moving past his desk and receiving a vote.

Truckee project uncertain after cornerstone grocer leaves

By Sage Sauerbrey, Moonshine Ink

Nugget Markets officially pulled out of the Truckee Railyard development this month after determining the area would not be able to support it as well as two other new grocery developments approved in the last two months: a Raley's at Soaring Way, and a Grocery Outlet at Gateway.

The loss of its cornerstone grocer puts an important component of the Railyard project, which has already endured its shares of hurdles, up in the air.

"To take the one prospect of a really great grocery store out of downtown Truckee, I don't know how you can conclude it to be anything other than incredibly damaging," said Douglas Wiele, president of Foothill Partners, the developer working with Nugget on the project. "It's not clear to me whether there is a solution; we may just walk away from the whole thing … the town has decided that sprawl is more important than the downtown."

Read the whole story

CalPERS retirees worried about their pensions

By Adam Ashton, Sacramento Bee

Call it the Loyalton effect.

CalPERS' decision in late 2016 to slash pensions for four retirees from the tiny mountain town startled the state's public workers so much that their confidence in the $354 billion fund began to plunge to its lowest level in five years.

It showed in an annual survey conducted by the California Public Employees' Retirement System that gauges how public employees, retirees and local government leaders feel about the state's largest pension system.

Read the whole story

Gaming conference turns from cheaters to active shooters

By Todd Prince, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The focus at the World Game Protection Conference in Las Vegas turned from cheaters to active shooters this year following deadly incidents in the Philippines, Chile and Las Vegas.

The annual show, which attracted about 600 security and surveillance professionals from around the world, held presentations on how to prevent and handle active-shooter

situations and robberies. The conference included an active-shooter simulation on the Strip.

Casinos surveillance and security systems have traditionally focused on preventing scams and theft on the gaming floor, but the jump in violence over the past years is redirecting attention, said Willy Allison, the show's organizer.

Read the whole story

Daffodil Hill will not open this season

By KCRA-TV

Daffodil Hill will not be opening for the 2018 season, the Ryan Family said Tuesday.

"Since the end of February we have had rain, hail, and snow every week. The early flowers are gone and the ones that are up are badly damaged," the ranch owners posted on Facebook.

Read the whole story

Students, women, teachers embrace activism

By David Crary, AP

Suddenly, America is on the march.

Saturday’s March for Our Lives, planned for Washington and hundreds of other locations, is just the most recent sign that an extraordinary number of Americans are taking to heart the old truism that democracy should not be a spectator sport.

In numbers not seen since the tumult of the 1960s and ’70s, multitudes are venturing off the sidelines and into the game in a remarkable surge of political and social activism. Their ranks include high school students angered by gun violence, teachers fed up with low pay, and women energized by a range of grievances — notably pervasive sexual harassment and the longtime dominance of men in political power.

Read the whole story

Budget deal includes wildfire disaster fund to end borrowing

By Matthew Daly, AP

A spending bill approved by the House includes a bipartisan plan to create a wildfire disaster fund to help combat increasingly severe wildfires that have devastated the West in recent years.

The bill sets aside more than $20 billion over 10 years to allow the Forest Service and other federal agencies end a practice of raiding non-fire-related accounts to pay for wildfire costs, which approached $3 billion last year.

The House approved the measure Thursday, with Senate action expected soon after as Congress faces a Friday night deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown.

Read the whole story

WCSO writes 100s of tickets during speed safety enforcement

Washoe County sheriff's deputies issued more than 300 citations for speeding violations during a statewide Joining Forces traffic safety event in early March.

From March 2-18, 2018, the sheriff's office, along with the Reno and Sparks Police Departments, and the Nevada Highway Patrol dedicated extra officers to enforce speed safety laws as part of ongoing efforts to increase safety on Nevada's roads and highways.

Sheriff's Office staff assigned to this event initiated 434 traffic stops. Although a driver may be stopped for one violation, several other violations may be observed during the subsequent investigation making it possible that a driver may be issued citations for numerous violations.

The total number of violations cited and warnings issued during this event was 565. Of those, 317 citations were issued for speeding. Violations cited by the Sheriff's Office during this campaign include:

- 317 speeding
- 45 cell phone use/distracted driving

- 54 registration violations
- 46 no insurance
- 31 driver’s license violations
- 9 equipment violations
- 3 fugitive arrests
- 3 red light violations
- 3 seat belt violations
- 2 failure to yield
- 1 child seat violation
- 1 reckless driving
- 1 pedestrian violation/driver at fault
- 4 other violations
- 45 warnings.

Sheriff’s office participation in this Joining Forces speed enforcement campaign was made possible by grant funding received from the Nevada Department of Public Safety/Office of Traffic Safety.

Money tight in EDC as budget talks about to start



El Dorado County CAO Don Ashton on March 21 talks finances. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Out of a $550 million annual budget the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors only gets to decide how a fraction of that is spent. It's the approximately $150 million General Fund that they have a say over. The rest is state and federal money that has strings attached.

And even though $150 million is a lot of money, it's not enough to do everything people in the county would like done.

"It is not possible to be small and rural, with low taxes and high levels of service. You get to pick two out of three. It's all about choices," CAO Don Ashton said.

Ashton is making the rounds through the county, speaking to groups and at town halls to give a glimpse into the county's finances. Budget hearings for the 2018-19 fiscal year begin in April, with the preliminary budget taking effect July 1.

While other gatherings have been well attended, the one in

Meyers on March 21 was somewhat of a bust. There were three employees of Lake Valley Fire Protection District and a former South Lake Tahoe City Council member in attendance. Still, the intimate setting allowed for a free flow of dialogue.

Unfunded mandates from the state continue to escalate and therefore drain the precious resources. The prison realignment from 2011 has people in the jails who are doing time well past the one-year maximum that county jails were designed for. These are more hardened criminals. Counties are feeling the financial burden.

“The biggest and scariest issue is CalPERS,” Ashton said.

Retirement costs through CalPERS is escalating, with the hit to the county estimated to be another $20 million in the next four years. Ashton described it as being “out of our control for the immediate future.”

Only the state Legislature can do something to change the system.

The county’s unfunded liability is $160 million.

“How we get through these next few years will be scary,” Ashton said.

Obligations surrounding mental health also take a toll on the county’s budget. Per state law counties must provide mental health services. However, what comes from the state is not enough to cover all the bills.

And if a local resident has to be housed in a facility outside El Dorado County because there isn’t a bed here, local taxpayers foot that bill.

El Dorado County is also being hurt by the state gas tax not producing as much revenue as was forecast. And if voters repeal it in November, it’s possible the county could lose about $5 million a year in anticipated revenue.

If the robust economy takes a turn, that, too, would be bad for county coffers. This is because taxes make up 71 percent of the General Fund revenue, with property taxes being 62 percent of that total. For every dollar people pay in property tax, the county gets about 23 percent.

During the Great Recession property values plummeted and the county suffered.

The electeds have contemplated increasing various taxes to generate income. All tax proposals must go to the voters.

A half-cent sales tax could generate $6 million a year. Today the rate is 7.25 percent in the county. This compares to South Lake Tahoe's rate of 7.75 percent.

Raising the hotel tax from 10 to 12 percent is being studied, though transient occupancy tax is not a huge piece of the pie at $3.4 million a year. Still, the rate is lower than the county's neighbors. South Lake Tahoe charges 12 or 14 percent depending on the location.

Supervisor Sue Novasel, who was at Wednesday's meeting, has brought up the idea of assessing TOT at campgrounds, just like South Lake Tahoe and other jurisdictions do. She has gotten push back on the West Slope.

What is unique about the county is that 5 percent off the top of all TOT collection goes to the Veterans Commission, then it's divvied up with 49 percent going to the General Fund and 51 percent to tourism/economic development. There is talk of taking the veterans out of the TOT pot and instead making that allocation a separate line item in the General Fund. This way if the TOT is raised, that group is not getting an automatic increase.

Novasel is a proponent of there being a nexus between a tax and what it is then spent on. Veterans and TOT don't fit that qualification.

Most of the General Fund money goes to law and justice (sheriff, district attorney, probation) at 58 percent, or $74 million. Of that the sheriff’s office gets the bulk – 68 percent, or $51 million.

That figure doesn’t include the $60 million state-of-the-art facility that will break ground this month. It will cost the county about $2.6 million a year for 40 years to pay for it. Where that will be in future budgets remains to be seen.

Supervisors only have control over the dollar amount in the sheriff’s budget, not how he spends it. He’s asking for four more deputies even though he has 14 vacancies.