

Nev. lawmakers to review pot, background check initiatives

By Associated Press

Nevada lawmakers will discuss voter petitions aimed at expanding background checks on gun purchases and legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

The Assembly Judiciary Committee is scheduled to review two initiative petitions on Monday that were approved by voters in December.

Initiative Petition 1 would legalize possession of up to one ounce of marijuana, and Initiative Petition 2 would require background checks on certain firearm purchases.

Republican committee chairman Ira Hansen said the bills will be moved out of committee without a recommendation and that Republican leadership will make a decision on what to do with the petitions this week.

The Legislature has 40 days from the start of the 120-day session to pass the initiatives before they are automatically placed on the 2016 ballot. The deadline is Friday.

Houses to spill south of Highway 50

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

Folsom will begin its long-planned march across Highway 50

this summer, a move that eventually could bring 10,000 new homes to an expanse of rolling hills now dotted mainly with oak trees. The move sends a strong signal that the market for new suburban housing in Sacramento is recovering from the near-knockout blow dealt by the recession.

Drought and climate change concerns loom, however. City officials acknowledge they are still working to secure the water agreements they likely will need for the expansion, and critics question whether the city will have enough water in dry years to provide for both new and existing residents.

Folsom's new frontier contains 3,500 acres of mainly grassland stretching south from Highway 50 to White Rock Road. Annexed a few years ago, it expanded Folsom's boundaries by 25 percent, although nearly a third of the land, an oak forest along Alder Creek, will remain open space.

Read the whole story

Staples sales fall for eighth straight quarter

By Sruthi Ramakrishnan, Reuters

Staples Inc reported its eighth straight decline in quarterly sales, highlighting the company's need to seal its deal to buy Office Depot Inc. as competition in the office supplies market intensifies.

Staples struck a deal in February to buy Office Depot for \$6.3 billion to better compete against Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Amazon.com Inc, which have been taking business from

traditional sellers of paper, pens and toner.

The deal is working its way through the antitrust process but is widely expected to win approval.

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Aerial mulching to resume in King Fire burn area

Straw mulch will be dropped this week on land that burned in last year's King Fire.

Approximately 320 acres along Eleven Pines Road were treated in November before heavy rain storms caused the work to be shut down.

Another 695 acres in the Eldorado National Forest will be treated with aerial mulching along Eleven Pines Road, with funding from the U.S. Forest Service, followed by approximately 250 acres northwest of the Brush Creek Reservoir, which is being paid for by Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

A contract was awarded to Salmon River Helicopters, based in Riggins, Idaho, who will use two helicopters to complete the project in seven days. The timeframe will be extended if weather conditions are not favorable.

The purpose of the project is to protect critical infrastructure from potentially severe post-fire erosion that may occur with winter storms, due to the loss of vegetative cover associated with the fire. The infrastructure at risk includes Eleven Pines Road, which serves as the primary route

from Highway 50 to the northern end of the Eldorado National Forest, and the Brush Creek and Slab Creek reservoirs, which are integral to SMUD's hydroelectric facilities in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Health benefit promises hurt school districts

By Zahira Torres, Los Angeles Times

California school districts once viewed lifetime healthcare coverage for employees as a cheap alternative to pay raises. That decision is coming back to haunt school leaders, and districts are scrambling to limit the lucrative benefit promised decades ago.

The price tag for retiree healthcare obligations has reached about \$20 billion statewide – an amount systems are not prepared to absorb.

Many districts failed to set aside money to pay for those increasingly expensive benefits for thousands of employees. Now, the financial burden threatens to drag down credit ratings and crowd out other budget priorities.

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Mexico drug cartels adapt to U.S. pot legalization

By Yemeli Ortega, MSN

The growing legalization of cannabis in the United States is forcing Mexico's drug cartels to rethink their illicit business model, turning to opium poppy plantations and domestic pot consumption, experts say.

Americans have been legally allowed to light up joints in the US capital since late last month, joining Washington state and Alaska, while Oregon will follow suit in July.

A total of 23 US states have legalized the drug for medical use, and opinion polls show that a slim majority of Americans favor legalization.

The changes in the world's biggest drug market appear to have prompted the criminal organizations producing narcotics in Mexico to switch strategies.

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Tahoe Beach & Ski Club changes management firms

Grand Pacific Resorts has added Tahoe Beach & Ski Club in South Lake Tahoe to its portfolio of managed timeshare resorts.

The resort features 140 condo units spread over six buildings.

David Brown, co-resident of Grand Pacific Resorts, in a statement said, "The addition of Tahoe Beach & Ski Club is an excellent opportunity to expand our already-deep roots in the Lake Tahoe area."

Grand Pacific manages Red Wolf Lakeside Lodge in Tahoe Vista and Red Wolf Lodge at Squaw Valley.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

2014 handgun sales set a Calif. record

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Dealers sold more than 510,000 handguns in California during 2014, more than double the number sold four years prior, according to new figures from the state Department of Justice.

Handgun sales in 2014 set a new California record, far outpacing the prior high of 433,000 handguns sold in 1993, near the time violent crime peaked in the state.

Read the whole story

Average U.S. hotel prices

increased 5% in 2014

By Hospitality Net

Americans paid an average of \$137 per night for hotel accommodations in the U.S. during 2014 – an increase of 5 percent compared to 2013.

The findings from the biannual Hotels.com Hotel Price Index support a positive outlook on the U.S. travel industry, as price increases were felt across most of the 50 most popular domestic destinations.

“While U.S. hotel prices exceeded the global increase of 3 percent, travelers were not deterred from exploring top destinations and up-and-coming alike,” said Neha Parikh, vice president and general manager, Hotels.com North America. “Growing consumer confidence and lower gas prices contributed to a number of U.S. destinations reporting record visitor numbers in 2014.”

While the U.S. experienced a rise in hotel prices nationally, more than half of the top 50 domestic destinations remained under the national average price paid of \$137. Four top destinations remained under the \$100 mark, including 29th ranked Reno, which was the most affordable Top 50 destination in 2014 as the average price remained at \$83 per night.

Read the whole story

Court upholds ban on high-

capacity gun magazines

By Lydia O'Connor, Huffington Post

Signaling a major win for gun control advocates, a California court ruled Wednesday that a city's ban on high-capacity gun magazines is both constitutional and in the best interest of a city trying to curb gun violence.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling that the Sunnyvale, California, city ordinance, which prohibits the possession of ammunition magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds, does not violate the Second Amendment. The lawsuit was brought forward by the National Rifle Association and other gun groups.

"The Second Amendment right is 'not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose,'" Judge Michael Daly Hawkins wrote for the unanimous three-judge panel.

Read the whole story