

Names released of people hurt in ZC accident



Six people were hurt in a two-car crash Feb. 28.

Photo/LTN

Names of the six people injured in a head-on crash on Highway 50 on Feb. 28 have been released by the Nevada Highway Patrol.

Paul P. Yang, 33, of San Diego was going east in the left lane “in a manner too fast for conditions,” according to the NHP. The Toyota Camry crossed into oncoming traffic and struck a Volvo driven by James R. Killebrew, 33, of Carson City.

The collision on Saturday occurred about 8:48am near Hidden Woods.

Passengers in the Camry were Abraham Kong, 19, Emily Chan, 29, Romando Sai, 29, and Weo F. Ye, 32, all of San Jose. All six were hospitalized with non-life threatening injuries.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. medical marijuana industry shrouded in secrecy

By Eric Hartley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

After they applied with the state to open a medical marijuana dispensary, the owners of Euphoria Wellness faced an odd choice: Did they want to keep their name secret from the public?

For them, the answer was easy.

“I have nothing to hide,” co-owner Joe Lamarca said. “I’m going to have a sign out that says ‘Euphoria Wellness.’ I’m not trying to be secretive about it – I’m running a business.”

But others made a different choice, shielded by a state law that keeps much of the information about Nevada’s emerging marijuana industry hidden from the public.

In all, 199 of the 519 applicants for medical marijuana licenses – 38 percent – chose to keep their names confidential, including more than 40 percent of would-be dispensary operators.

Read the whole story

Cracks appearing in public pensions’ armor

By Mary Williams Walsh, New York Times

First in Detroit, then in Stockton, and now in New Jersey,

judges and other top officials are challenging the widespread belief that public pensions are untouchable.

Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey delivered the latest blow on Tuesday, when he proposed to freeze that state's public pension plans and move workers into new ones intended not to overwhelm future budgets or impose open-ended demands on taxpayers.

The first crack came in Detroit, where a judge ruled that public pensions could, in fact, be reduced, at least in bankruptcy. Then, just a few weeks ago, an opinion by the bankruptcy judge for Stockton, which emerged from Chapter 9 on Wednesday, called California's mighty public pension system, CalPERS, a bully for insisting in court that pension cuts were wholly out of the question.

Such dogma "encourages dysfunctional strategies," wrote the judge, Christopher Klein, chief judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of California. He said CalPERS's legal arguments were invalid, and he concluded that it lacked standing to dominate the courtroom discussion the way it had. Stockton did not even seek permission to freeze its pension plans, but the judge nevertheless wrote that it was entitled to do so and went on to cite steps that struggling cities in general should take to trim their pension costs legally.

Read the whole story

Spinouts, slick roads keep

Law enforcement busy



Slick conditions on Echo Summit contributed to this accident the afternoon of Feb. 28. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Law enforcement has been dealing with spinouts all day in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The California Highway Patrol dispatch center in Truckee said there have been no injury accidents in their jurisdiction, which includes the entire basin. South Lake Tahoe Police Department as of 6:10pm Feb. 28 also has had zero injury accidents. Truckee police officers on Saturday responded to more than 15 reports of traffic collisions and vehicle spinouts because of the snow.

On the South Shore six people were hurt Saturday morning about one mile west of Cave Rock on Highway 50.

Snow totals have varied from about an inch in South Lake Tahoe to nearly a foot in Meyers and even more on the North Shore.

A winter weather advisory is in effect until 8pm Feb. 28 for the Tahoe-Truckee areas. Sunday is supposed to be mostly sunny, according to the National Weather Service, with a high of 39 degrees in Tahoe. Snow is back in the forecast for

Monday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nevada lawmakers introduce competing equal pay bills

By Riley Snyder, AP

Nevada lawmakers are introducing competing bills aimed at closing the gender pay gap.

Assembly and Senate Democrats rallied with sign-toting supporters in front of the state legislative building earlier this week, calling on lawmakers to pass a bill requiring women and minority groups to be paid equally. State Sen. Pat Spearman introduced a bill that would incorporate parts of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Paycheck Fairness Act.

“This is not something that I thought up last night,” the Las Vegas Democrat said. “This is really something that really has been in the works since before the session ended last time.”

Meanwhile, Republican Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson is sponsoring SB167, which would empower the state Equal Rights Commission to administer fines and strengthen Nevada discrimination protection law. Roberson said his bill, which was introduced in the Senate last week, and he wasn’t aware of Spearman’s bill.

“I see a lot of press releases,” he said. “Where are the bills?”

Both proposals would allow employees who prove discrimination

to collect up to two years of back pay and would allow the state's administrative body to levy fines against employers. Spearman said her bill would create a penalty for repeat offenders and would also allow workers to collect attorney's fees if legal action is taken.

Spearman said her bill goes further than Roberson's and equal pay is an area that shouldn't be compromised.

"In the words of Dr. King, there's a fierce urgency of now," she said.

The proposals are based on federal legislation that extend the statute of limitations on discrimination claims and seek to reduce the wage gap by making wages more transparent and fairly allocated.

Republicans and Democrats in the Senate have introduced similar legislation on a number of issues during the session, including bond rollovers for school construction and tightening laws that forbid stalking and domestic abuse convicts from owning firearms.

Truckee Meadows Community College political science professor Fred Lokken said the maneuvering is unusual, and it could hurt Democrats.

"It's kind of like they're hijacking legislation and modifying it," he said of Republicans. "The intent could be for Republicans to derail the entirety of the Democrats' agenda."

6 people hurt in 2-car

accident in Zephyr Cove



Witnesses told Lake Tahoe News it's surprising anyone lived. Photo/LTN

Updated 12:37pm:

Six people were injured in a two-vehicle accident Saturday morning in Zephyr Cove.

The two vehicles hit each head-on near Hidden Woods on Highway 50 about 8:50am Feb. 28.

Three people were transported to Renown Medical Center in Reno and three to Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe. All had serious injuries. The one person who was flown to Renown was in critical condition, according to NHP Trooper Dan Lopez.

Speed and snow contributed to the accident, Lopez said.

"They were going too fast in the snowy conditions on the roadway," Lopez told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Chain controls were up."

A Toyota Camry with three men and two women from Southern California was headed east when the vehicle crossed into oncoming traffic, Lopez said. The Camry struck a Volvo SUV driven by a Carson City resident.

Both vehicles flipped over. The road is open after being partially closed for about two hours.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Unexpected consequences of ongoing drought

By Lydia O'Connor, Huffington Post

What happens when America's most populous state runs low on its most precious resource for the fourth year in a row?

A lack of rainfall doesn't just result in problems for farmers, the food industry and people with sprawling lawns. It can have serious consequences that aren't so obvious. While there have been concerns about California's relentless drought creating weird-tasting beer and driving a sudden surge in succulent thievery, there are lesser-known side effects that are pretty alarming.

"The proportion of mosquitoes infected with West Nile virus is at the highest level ever detected in California," Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health announced in September. By the end of 2014, the state had recorded 798 human cases, the most since 2005 and more than five times the number recorded in 2011, when the historic

drought began. Of those infected, 29 died.

Rats and other rodents moving into human-populated areas mean even more unwanted animals follow. Sacramento's Len Ramirez, who runs a rattlesnake removal business, told CBS Sacramento that halfway through 2014, it was already one of the busiest years he'd seen in nearly three decades. In just one week in July, he removed 72 rattlesnakes that got too close for people's comfort.

In some cases, less water means a higher likelihood of coming in contact with contaminated water. Californians who rely on private wells for water, often in the state's poor, rural areas, are at particular risk, Reuters reports, because there's a higher concentration of contaminants when there's less water.

Read the whole story

Ballot measures: South Lake Tahoe voters make critical financial decisions for the city



Linear Park in South Lake Tahoe received a makeover with the help of Measure R funds. Photo/LTN file

Publisher's note: *This is one in a series of stories Lake Tahoe News will be running leading up to the 50th anniversary of South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 30.*

By Kathryn Reed



One reason South Lake Tahoe incorporated 50 years ago was to have a greater say in how it was governed. Residents were a bit disgruntled with how the powers that be in Placerville were doing things at the lake.

It took a vote of the populace to make the city of South Lake Tahoe a reality. But that wasn't the end of ballot initiatives in the city. Through the years voters have had an opportunity to decide on a number of issues.

All tax proposals, by law, must go to voters – whether it's at the city, county or state level. But a city can bring other issues up for a vote – like parking. The June 3, 2014, Measure P was the last item a City Council put on the ballot.



Anti-paid parking advocates took their cause to voters in June 2014. Photo/LTN file

This came about because of the controversial metered parking program the city had initiated in various parts of town. While the issue had been talked about for years, approved by various councils and included in budgets, after it became a reality a group of citizens called Tahoe for Tahoe wanted the meters and the program to be abolished. Because of legal reasons they could not get a measure on the ballot themselves. The city, knowing it could essentially be stabbing itself in the foot, agreed to take the issue to the people.

And the people said get rid of the program. It required a 50 percent plus 1 percent vote to pass. It did so with 66.96 percent.

The meters associated with the program were removed Aug. 31, 2014.

The first vote put to the people after incorporation came on Nov. 6, 1984. It was called Measure C. This would have created the county of Tahoe. It failed, with the naysayers casting 22,027 votes and proponents having 18,434 votes.

This idea, though, has not gone away. There are people today who believe the basin portion of El Dorado County would be better off being its own county.



Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, which was Embassy Suites when it opened, is a still a player in redevelopment.

Next came another Measure C, but for a completely different reason. This was to increase the transient occupancy tax to 10 percent in most parts of the city and to 12 percent at specific hotels in the redevelopment area.

Voters on Nov. 8, 1988, said yes with 77.5 percent. It required a 66 percent yes vote to pass.

This was the start of redevelopment in the city. The purpose of the higher tax rate was and still is to help pay off the \$110 million bond debt in case property taxes were ever insufficient. Every year at least some of those TOT dollars have gone to the debt. That debt won't be paid off for more than 20 years. There was a time before the recession that only \$100,000 from the TOT was needed to help with the debt. As property values rise, the property taxes increase, which in turn means less TOT required to pay the bills and more of it going to the general fund.

The city didn't ask the voters for anything else until 12 years down the road. This time it was a joint measure with El Dorado County and the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. The three formed the Community Facilities District Recreation Joint Powers Authority.



Hockey keeps becoming more popular at the city owned ice rink. Photo/ Jessie Marchesseau

A special election was called on Sept. 19, 2000, where voters were asked to pay a 30-year \$18/year tax to fund recreation. This was known as Measure S. The \$6.5 million in bonds are to be paid off in 2030. The money paid for the city ice rink that is now operated by a private company, the ball field next to Lake Tahoe Community College and \$50,000 a year of TPRID, as well as bike trail improvements.

Sixty-nine percent of the voters said yes.

Hotel taxes were back before voters two years later.

Measure Z passed on Nov. 5, 2002, with 56.1 percent of the voters saying yes. It needed 50 percent plus 1 percent vote.

This measure added \$1 to every hotel room night to add to the city's transient occupancy tax revenue. TOT along with property and sales taxes are the three main revenue sources for South Lake Tahoe.

It was in place from Feb. 1, 2004, to Oct. 31, 2006. Measure Z brought in about \$1.1 million a year when it existed, which at the time helped the city make ends meet.

This was the last time the city raised the TOT.



South Lake Tahoe lodging establishments are assessing a fee that goes toward marketing. Photo/Provided

However, in 2006 the South Lake Tahoe Tourism Improvement District was formed. The group of lodging establishments agreed to assess guests \$3 per night at hotels-motels and \$4.50 night at time shares and agent-managed vacation home rentals. That money is then used for marketing purposes by the district. It is considered a fee and that is why it did not have to go to the voters.

They did this the day after Measure Z expired.

The sales tax in South Lake Tahoe went from 7.25 percent to 7.75 percent after voters gave the go-ahead on Nov. 2, 2004.

Measure Q passed with 58 percent of the vote. It needed 50 percent plus 1 percent for approval.

That extra half percent goes directly to South Lake Tahoe. This is unlike most sales tax that is set by the state, collected by the state, and spent by the state. Some is filtered back to the county and then the city, but not a ton compared to what is collected.

Voters on Nov. 8, 2005, said no to raising the snow removal fee. This was called Measure R – not to be confused with the later recreation measure by the same name.

This Measure R would have increased the snow removal tax from

\$20 to \$40 per parcel. It required a two-thirds approval, but only 54.2 percent of the voters said yes so it failed.

Voters on Nov. 3, 2010, were asked to revise Measures S with Measure B, which stood for ball fields. It would have given more money to ball fields, but the bike community came together to help defeat the measure.

It needed 66 percent to pass; it received 60.54 percent.

Next up was the idea to increase the maximum amount on business license fees. It would have increased the not to exceed amount from \$3,387 to \$10,000 per calendar year.

But voters on Nov. 2, 2010, said no to Measure E – but barely. It required a 50 percent plus 1 percent vote. It received 50.81 percent.



Bicycle trails are improving
with Measure S/R funds.
Photo/LTN file

Ball field and bicycle advocates came together in 2011 to successfully rewrite Measure S. What is now known as Measure R was approved by voters that Nov. 8. It rejiggered how money could be allocated, making it less restrictive. More existing ball fields and bike trails have received upgrades instead of the money mostly going to new facilities.

On the June 5, 2012, ballot the business license cap was revisited by the city.

The analysis from the city attorney at time regarding Measure B said, "Passage of Measure B will reduce the business license tax on 95 percent of businesses in the city of South Lake Tahoe by 5 percent. The measure increases the maximum any business pays from \$3,448 to \$20,000 based on the tax rate for each type of business. The current business license tax rates and maximum tax are increased annually for inflation, but if Measure B passes, the tax rate per \$1,000 of gross receipts and the maximum tax of \$20,000 shall not be increased for inflation."

It passed with 55.61 percent of the votes.

The next ballot measure likely to be put forth by the city will come in 2016. It may be to raise the transient occupancy tax or create an amusement tax or both, all with the purpose of creating a funding source for recreation improvements.

Congresswoman wants to repeal sports wagering tax

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Seeking to save as much as \$11 million in taxes paid by some Nevada companies each year, Rep. Dina Titus today reintroduced legislation that would roll back a federal handle tax on sports wagers.

In a letter to the leaders of the House Ways and Means Committee, Titus argues that the tax was supposed to fund investigations of illegal wagering operations, but the Internal Revenue Service couldn't confirm the funds were being used as intended.

Tahoe Paradise to set sail again

Sightseeing cruises on the South Shore will resume next week.

After being docked for more than a month because of the low lake level, the Tahoe Paradise will be taking on passengers starting March 5. The yacht will sail daily at 1:30pm from the Ski Run Marina.

The Tahoe Queen is still sidelined because of the water level in the channel at the marina. Aramark operates both vessels. It is Aramark's responsibility to dredge so there is access, but the company hasn't even taken out a permit.

The M.S. Dixie II, the company's other paddle-wheeler, is out of commission as it goes through a renovation. It should be back in service in late spring out of Zephyr Cove marina.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report