

Caesars changing CEOs

By Nikki Bowers, KLAS-TV

LAS VEGAS – Caesars Entertainment Corporation announced Wednesday that its CEO was stepping down.

“After 12 years as CEO, Caesars has accomplished more than what we could have imagined when I arrived in 1998. Now, with the company in the midst of a formal restructuring of one of its subsidiaries and a merger between entities, the time is ripe for a transition,” said Gary Loveman, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Caesars Entertainment.

According to a statement from the company, Loveman will begin transitioning management of the company at the end of the first quarter.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah’s Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

Read the whole story

Incline Village couple suing Bear League

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A Lake Tahoe couple who claims they were harassed and subjected to death threats after reporting a problem-causing bear that was later killed by authorities have sued a nonprofit bear advocacy group they contend was responsible for the harassment.

Richard and Adrienne Evans of Incline Village sued the Bear League and the organization's founder, Ann Bryant, seeking unspecified damages in connection with the December 2013 incident at the upscale north Tahoe community.

Through the suit, filed Dec. 8 in the Washoe District Court, the Evans hope to alter a pattern of behavior that has people properly reporting black bear problems to Nevada wildlife officials subject to harmful harassment by critics, said the couple's Reno attorney, Sean Rose.

An attorney representing Bryant and the Bear League did not return repeated phone calls by the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. In an answer to the complaint filed in District Court Dec. 30, central allegations made in the Evans' complaint were denied, including that the Bear League urged and encouraged the alleged harassment.

Read the whole story

SLT firefighter quits; remains in custody

By Kathryn Reed

Disgraced South Lake Tahoe fire Capt. Mark WyGant has resigned, making him no longer on the city's payroll after Feb. 4. WyGant received one day of paid administrative leave.

WyGant is accused of possessing more than 5,000 child pornography images and 50 videos of child porn.



Mark Wygant

He remains in federal custody after being arrested Jan. 29.

A flash drive with the sexual images was found by a city employee and turned into authorities. The internal investigation led local law enforcement to believe the drive belonged to a member of the fire department. Then the FBI was brought in. Wygant was later identified as the suspect.

Images are explicit, including showing young girls having anal, vaginal and oral sex with men – but none of Wygant engaging in any acts. *Lake Tahoe News* has been told that no local children are believed to be in any of the images. According to the criminal complaint, Wygant admitted to filming at least one young girl.

The complaint lists Wygant's address as Chico. The memorandum of understanding the city and firefighters are working under does not have a residency requirement. This is new as of last fall when contracts were being reworked. Prior to the new MOU, Wygant had been leasing a place in Tahoma. After the MOU was written he changed his residency to Chico. (The city agreed to remove the residency requirement because of case law that said this violated employees' rights.)

Wygant has a court hearing scheduled for Feb. 13 in Sacramento.

Nevada not a great place for high-value jobs

By Andrea Domanick, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's workforce may be well on its way to recovering from the economic crash, but the state still has a long way to go when it comes to developing jobs critical for long-term growth, the Brookings Institute found.

Nevada ranks almost last nationally for high-value jobs.

A new report, "America's Advanced Industries: What They Are, Where They Are, and Why They Matter," outlines the strength and distribution of 50 advanced industry sectors across the United States, including manufacturing, energy, computer software and biotechnology.

[Read the whole story](#)

Atmospheric river en route to Sierra

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Water vapor – Mississippi River-size amounts of it flowing at hurricane speeds miles above the Earth – is hurtling across the Pacific, an atmospheric river poised to drench a parched Northern California and the Sacramento region as early as

Thursday night.

A crack team of science experts is going along for the ride, part of an experiment known as CalWater 2015, many of whom gathered at McClellan Park near Sacramento on Tuesday in preparation for the major weather event and the vital information they hope to pull from the phenomenon.

“It’s a real milestone for us. Nothing of this scope has happened,” said Marty Ralph, director of the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, of the project he’s helping to lead. “One of the drivers of CalWater was the uncertainty of climate projections. We haven’t had the data to measure the strength and structure of ARs. ... There’s so much potential for the monitoring of atmospheric rivers.”

Read the whole story

Colo. may have to give pot money to the public

By Kristen Wyatt, AP

DENVER — Colorado’s marijuana experiment was designed to raise revenue for the state and its schools, but a state law may put some of the tax money directly into residents’ pockets, causing quite a headache for lawmakers.

The state constitution limits how much tax money the state can take in before it has to give some back. That means Coloradans may each get their own cut of the \$50 million in recreational pot taxes collected in the first year of legal weed. It’s a

situation so bizarre that it's gotten Republicans and Democrats, for once, to agree on a tax issue.

Even some pot shoppers are surprised Colorado may not keep the taxes that were promised to go toward school construction when voters legalized marijuana in 2012.

"I have no problem paying taxes if they're going to schools," said Maddy Beaumier, 25, who was visiting a dispensary near the Capitol.

But David Huff, a 50-year-old carpenter from Aurora, said taxes that add 30 percent or more to the price of pot, depending on the jurisdiction, are too steep.

"I don't care if they write me a check, or refund it in my taxes, or just give me a free joint next time I come in. The taxes are too high, and they should give it back," Huff said.

Legal weed has collided with the tax limitation movement because a 1992 voter-approved constitutional amendment called the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights requires all new taxes to go before voters.

The amendment also requires Colorado to pay back taxpayers when the state collects more than what's permitted by a formula based on inflation and population growth. Over the years, Colorado has issued refunds six times, totaling more than \$3.3 billion.

Republicans and Democrats say there's no good reason to put pot taxes back into people's pockets, and state officials are scrambling to figure out how to avoid doling out the money. It may have to be settled by asking Colorado voters, for a third time, to cast a ballot on the issue and exempt pot taxes from the refund requirement.

Republicans concede that marijuana is throwing them off their usual position of wanting tax dollars returned to taxpayers.

But they also tend to say that marijuana should pay for itself – that general taxes shouldn't pay for things like increased drug education and better training for police officers to identify stoned drivers.

"I think it's appropriate that we keep the money for marijuana that the voters said that we should," said Republican Senate President Bill Cadman. His party opposes keeping other refunds based on the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights but favors a special ballot question on pot taxes.

"This is a little bit of a different animal. There's a struggle on this one," said Sen. Kevin Grantham, one of the Republican budget writers.

After legalizing marijuana in 2012, Colorado voters returned to the polls the following year and approved a 15 percent excise tax on pot for the schools and an additional 10 percent sales tax for lawmakers to spend.

Voters were told those taxes would generate about \$70 million in the first year. The state now believes it will rake in about \$50 million.

But because the economy is improving and other tax collections are growing faster, Colorado is obligated to give back much of what it has collected. Final numbers aren't ready, but the governor's budget writers predict the pot refunds could amount to \$30.5 million, or about \$7.63 per adult in Colorado.

"It's just absurd," said Democratic state Sen. Pat Steadman, one of the Legislature's budget writers.

The head-scratching extends to Colorado's marijuana industry. Several industry groups actively campaigned for the pot taxes but aren't taking a position on whether to refund them.

Mike Elliott of the Denver-based Marijuana Industry Group said it isn't pushing for lower taxes, but that's an option

lawmakers don't seem to be considering. State law doesn't bar lawmakers from cutting taxes without a vote.

Lawmakers have a little time to figure out how to proceed. They'll consider pot refunds and a separate refund to taxpayers of about \$137 million after receiving final tax estimates that are due in March.

When they talk about pot refunds, they'll have to figure out if the money would go to all taxpayers, or just those who bought pot. Previous refunds have generally been paid through income tax returns, but Colorado also has reduced motor vehicle fees or even reduced sales taxes on trucks.

Lawmakers seem confident that the refund mechanism won't matter because voters would approve pot taxes a third time if asked.

"This is what the voters want, and if we're going to have (pot), and the constitution says it's legal, we damn well better tax it," Steadman said.

Ambulance subsidy rankles SLT officials

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is tired of subsidizing ambulance service on the South Shore and is about to demand El Dorado County pay what it actually costs to run the program.

The bulk of the Feb. 3 City Council meeting centered on the 14-year-old Cal-Tahoe JPA which oversees the ambulance service that is provided by South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire

departments.

While the local agencies, with oversight by a board of directors, run the day-to-day operations, it is the responsibility of the county to provide residents with ambulance service. If the JPA were to disband, ambulance service would be solely the county's responsibility.

When the county went out for a bid in 2011 only the JPA made an offer. That contract expires in 2016, though the county has granted the JPA board's request to open the contract.



Ambulance service per law must be provided by El Dorado County. Photo/LTN

The fire departments operate three full-time and two reserve ambulances. But the county is only paying for two vehicles.

The county has also drained the coffers by reimbursing the JPA for trips to other hospitals at a flat fee. Inter-facility transfers used to garner 93 percent of the cost for the JPA, plus mileage. At that time it was a big revenue stream.

Another financial obstacle is that when the benefit assessment district was formed the engineer's report left out condos and timeshares from having to pay the fee. Wording in the assessment says, "Each property shall be assessed in relation to the entire cost of the provided service." That isn't happening and the JPA board wants all parcels to pay their

share.

The county also is not reimbursing the city for what it actually costs to run the dispatch center.

Fire Chief Jeff Meston told the council the JPA has been subsidizing the ambulance service for 13 years for a total of \$13 million. Of that amount, \$8.58 million came from the city's pocketbook and nearly \$4.5 million from Lake Valley.

The council agreed to meet with Supervisor Sue Novasel, who represents Tahoe on the Board of Supervisors, to request an item be put on the supervisors' agenda regarding equitable compensation for the ambulance JPA. The vote was 4-0, with Councilwoman JoAnn Conner abstaining. She is on the JPA board and believes the council is usurping her authority.

Her council colleagues said as group they are a stronger voice than the JPA board, but are not trying to step on the JPA board's toes.

The JPA board is made up of two council members and two Lake Valley Fire board members.

Part of the problem in getting the county be fair is that the JPA board for years was totally dysfunctional. Ever since North Tahoe Fire Protection District left the JPA in 2006, many votes have been 2-2, so progress was stalled. Slowly they have begun to play nice.

But still, South Tahoe wants a fifth board member, but Lake Valley says no. There has been talk of officials from Barton Health or CalStar being a fifth member or even increasing the board to seven to possibly function better.

It wasn't until Meston came on board that the true operating costs and subsidizes made by the city and Lake Valley have come to light.

Lake Valley Fire Chief Gareth Harris was in the room for the

entire discussion, but never left his seat in the front row.

2 El Dorado County residents headed for prison

Two Meeks Bay residents are about to spend several years in prison on burglary and other charges.

After more than three days of deliberations following a three-week trial in Placerville, an El Dorado County Superior Court jury on Jan. 29 found Craig Ivan Adams, 34, guilty of 17 felony charges, including nine counts of burglary, four counts of a felon in possession of firearms, and grand theft of a firearms.

Katy Manoff, 30, earlier had pleaded guilty to similar charges. El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury sentenced her to 22 years and four months in state prison.

Between June and November 2010 the two went on a drug-induced crime spree between South Lake Tahoe and Cameron Park, according to court records.

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office in a press release said, "The defendants would knock on the front door of a residence and if the homeowner answered the door the defendants would ask for a fictitious name and when told the person didn't live there, they would leave. However, if no one answered the door the defendants would gain entry through an unlocked door or force entry. The defendants would then utilize a pillowcase from the home and burglarize the residence."

Adams is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 27.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Obama's budget good for Calif. parks, wildlife areas

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

California would get its share, and then some, from the Obama administration's \$4 trillion budget proposal delivered Monday to a skeptical, Republican-controlled Congress.

There's money for restoring the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which is likely to survive congressional winnowing. Proposed upgrades at places including Yosemite National Park probably will find Capitol Hill favor, as well, along with funding for Central Valley flood control and dam improvements.

The budget, for instance, would offer \$3.5 million to complete the Army Corps of Engineers' design and engineering studies for protecting the Sacramento area's Natomas Basin. It would provide tens of millions of dollars to upgrade Folsom Dam northeast of Sacramento and improve the safety of the earthen Isabella Dam in eastern Kern County. These projects enjoy bipartisan support.

But the president's budget includes more fanciful proposals, including some familiar spending cuts and fee increases that invariably fail. A renewed proposal to eliminate the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, for instance, would cut federal reimbursements for prisons and jails that incarcerate undocumented immigrants.

Read the whole story

Knorr's tenure as EDC's top official continues

Pamela Knorr has job security at least for one year.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors today unanimously appointed her chief administrative officer for the next year.



Pam Knorr

This is a job she has had since November when then-CAO Terri Daly abruptly left after having lost the confidence of three supervisors. (The two supervisors who liked Daly – Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs – have since been termed out and replaced.)

Knorr was hired by Daly to be in charge of the Human Resources Department, a position she still has and that the board has no problem with. No background check had ever been done on Knorr. She and Daly are friends.

In closed session Feb. 3 the board agreed to spend a year looking for a permanent CAO. Normally, these types of hires take much less time.

Knorr has served in various positions in Amador, Napa, Placer, Alpine and El Dorado counties. Before coming to El Dorado County she was CAO in Alpine County for five years. An employee from Alpine County has since filed a lawsuit against her.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*