

Support declines to expand transitional kindergarten

By Sharon Noguchisnoguchi, San Jose Mercury News

Though support for expanding elementary education to all 4-year-olds has fallen dramatically since the spring, a majority of Californians still believe in sending young children to preschool, a poll released Tuesday shows.

A Field Poll shows that 58 percent of voters think it is very important for the state to spend more so that all low-income 4-year-olds have access to state-supported preschool.

But only 39 percent of voters said California should spend \$1.4 billion to expand the state's newest elementary-school grade, known as transitional kindergarten, to all 4-year-olds.

That compares with 57 percent advocating expansion in a similar poll in April.

The latest poll, taken in October with the not-for-profit Oakland-based group EdSource, was conducted in English and Spanish by phone with 1,010 registered voters in the state.

Read the whole story

Self-employed find it's not

easy to get a mortgage

By Tim Logan, Los Angeles Times

Despite often earning higher incomes, self-employed borrowers have a harder time getting a mortgage than their salaried peers, according to a new study out Thursday. And as the ranks of the self-employed grow, that's hindering the housing recovery.

People whose primary income comes from self-employment receive 40 percent fewer loan quotes than the average would-be borrower, according to data crunched by real estate website Zillow.

The biggest reasons why: lower credit scores and more complex paperwork to verify income.

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High cost of death penalty could affect Nev.

By Ana Ley, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's criminal justice system spends nearly twice as much handling death penalty cases compared with murder cases where capital punishment isn't sought, according to a report released Tuesday by state auditors.

The state-mandated study, which surveyed data from 27 state and local agencies, gives ammunition to death penalty opponents who have failed to defeat public support for capital

punishment using moral objections. It is, by far, Nevada's most comprehensive study on the controversial practice and will serve as a law makers' guide for years to come.

"As we move into the next (legislative) session and the session after that, we would still be able to use this as basic information to frame the discussion around the death penalty for a while," Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton, D-Las Vegas, said after auditors Paul Townsend and Dan Crossman presented the study before a legislative panel in Carson City. "It's very thorough."

Auditors assembled the 105-page report by sampling data from 28 cases, calculating costs associated with legal counsel – both defense and prosecution – as well as for money spent on court proceedings and incarceration.

Read the whole story

Calif. falling short of water conservation goals



Cove East in South Lake
Tahoe on Nov 25. Photo/LTN

By Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO – The three-year drought gripping California has shrunk reservoirs, rivers, creeks and snowpacks while leaving Californians drawing heavily on underground aquifers to water everything from lawns to crops.

Farmers account for about 80 percent of water used in the state, but Gov. Jerry Brown has asked California households to save water as well. Here's a look at how it's going and what the problems are.

Q: How are Californians doing when it comes to meeting the state's goal for reducing water use?

A: Not as well as hoped. Brown in January declared a drought emergency, and asked Californians to cut residential water use by 20 percent. The latest figures released Tuesday by the state show that Californians managed to reduce their daily water use by only 6.7 percent in October compared to the same period last year. The closest the state's 38 million people have come to meeting the 20 percent goal was in August, when water use was down 11.6 percent year-on-year. Still, the state Water Resources Control Board said Tuesday that Californians have saved 90 billion gallons since June – enough water for 1.2 million people for a year.

Q: Why are Californians falling so short?

A: Water board officials said they're trying to figure out if the usage was caused by a lack of awareness about the drought; not enough enforcement of conservation guidelines; this year's hotter weather; or something else. Board members threw out ideas Tuesday ranging from asking the state Transportation Department to post stronger messages about the drought on flashing highway advisory signs, to looking at whether more penalties should be imposed on big water users.

Water board officials say some of the key problem areas are affluent communities in Southern California, where rainfall is always short but residents love their green lawns, golf

courses and swimming pools. Californians in the south coast region managed to cut water consumption by only 1.4 percent in October, the weakest showing in the state.

Q: It's raining in California now, so why still worry about saving water?

A: California officials say the state would need 150 percent of its normal annual rainfall to recover from drought. As of this autumn, the state had marked its driest three years on record, the federal government's National Climatic Data Center said. Storms so far this rainy season have brought parts of the state closer to normal rainfall for this point in the year. But the most important reservoirs contain just 39 percent to 60 percent of normal water levels. The snowpack in the Sierra Nevada, one of the most critical sources for state water year-round, is also lagging. Before the Tuesday storms, the southern Sierra had gotten just 47 percent of its normal rain and snow so far, and the northern Sierra 79 percent.

Q: How hard is the drought hitting California?

A: Poorer, rural communities in the agricultural Central Valley are feeling some of the sharpest impacts. Hundreds of wells have gone dry as water tables recede, leaving families to rely on trucked-in water or even water collected for them by Girl Scouts. Some farmers say they've had to spend thousands of dollars more to dig deeper well or buy water, and some have seen almond and pistachio trees or other orchards shrivel. The drought has been hard on wildlife as well. State and federal officials last month, for example, said low water in creeks meant one kind of coho salmon in Northern California was apparently unable to breed at all this year. The officials had to move all year-old cohos in that creek to a hatchery to try to save the species.

Hospitals killing tens of thousands fewer people

By Jason Millman, Washington Post

Wide-ranging efforts to make hospital care safer have resulted in an estimated 50,000 fewer patients dying because of avoidable errors in the past three years, according to a report presented by government and industry officials on Tuesday.

Hospitals reported 1.3 million fewer hospital-acquired infections in all between 2011-2013 compared to the rate of mistakes that hospitals made in 2010, according to the report from the Department of Health and Human Services. That represented a 17 percent drop in hospital errors from 2010, but about 12 percent of all hospitalizations as of 2013 still experienced an adverse event during the course of care.

The reduction of these avoidable incidents – such as falls, pressure ulcers, adverse drug events and more – meant \$12 billion in savings to the health-care system between 2011 and 2013, according to HHS.

Read the whole story

LTCC on dual course to offer

4-year degrees

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College is on a path that would allow students to obtain a four-year degree two ways.

One is through allowing universities to offer their programs on the South Lake Tahoe campus, the other is by being selected as one of the 15 community colleges in California to be part of a pilot program offering baccalaureate degrees.

"We really want to bring programs to Tahoe that will benefit Tahoe," LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We would love to have UC Davis on campus. I think it would be a good partnership with (Tahoe Environmental Research Center) on the North Shore (at Sierra Nevada College)."

Through Measure F, the \$55 million facilities bond that voters approved last month, one line item was for a university center. There is \$825,000 in the bond to renovate a section of campus to allow for a CSU, UC or UNR to have a presence at LTCC.

The state will not pay for a university center.

But the ideal situation would be to have a standalone building that the higher education institutions could use for classrooms, registration and counseling.

Lisa Maloff is allowing this to occur with her \$5 million gift to LTCC. She is the widow of Bob Maloff, who at one time owned what was the Timber Cove Lodge. They both have been and continue to be, through this donation, supporters of the college. This is the single largest donation the college has ever received.

Maloff was not available for comment.

"She doesn't want a lot of recognition. She is very humble about this. She wants to do something for the college and the community," Murillo said.

A university center is a location on a community college campus occupied by staff from four-year colleges who offer their programs locally. It gives them their own identity.

"They are not part of us," Murillo explained. That means LTCC staff does not register students for those classes, nor offer counseling or anything else. The universities are essentially renting space from LTCC.

Depending on how many institutions are interested and when classes would be offered, the center could handle three to four colleges.

"One thing I'd like to see is a teaching credential, particularly for bi-literate teachers," Murillo said. "I have to directly negotiate with the university and work with them."

That will be done over the course of the next year.

It's estimated it will take about 3½ years from now for the building to be done. Plans need to be drawn, permits obtained, the state architect's office will be involved, and then construction of the approximately 5,500-square-foot facility begins.

If the \$825,000 from the bond is needed for the larger facility, then that is where it will go. Otherwise the college will figure out how it will be spent on other facilities.

The other way the college is looking to add four-year degrees is through the state. The college this week filed an application with the intent to be part of a pilot program. LTCC is proposing a public safety administration degree.

With the current course offerings, this would complement what is in place. Today LTCC offers an associate of arts and

transfer degree in criminal justice, and three AA degrees and certificates in the area of fire, including fire science, fire officer, and fire academy.

A team comprised of Chancellor's Office staff, a member of the business and workforce community, CSU and UC representatives, and community college staff from districts that did not apply to host a program will review the proposals. The chancellor will then make a recommendation to the CSU and UC systems. The final decision is expected Jan. 21.

Federal judges deal mixed hand to tribe's bid for Amador casino

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Federal judges far from California dealt a mixed hand this week to a long-debated casino proposed for the Amador County foothills near Ione.

On Tuesday, a top appeals court rejected the Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians' bid to intervene in a lawsuit challenging federal approval of the casino. Tribal leaders had wanted to intervene so they could defeat the underlying lawsuit through a powerful claim of sovereign immunity.

The unanimous, 10-page decision Tuesday by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit means a trial judge can rule on the merits of a challenge filed by Amador County more than nine years ago.

But while the ruling Tuesday was a bit of a blow to the Buena

Vista Rancheria, a Supreme Court decision issued Monday helped the tribe.

[Read the whole story](#)

House votes to expand N. Nevada tribal land

By Steve Tetreault, Stephens Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A bill to expand the reservations of six Indian tribes in Northern Nevada was approved Monday in the U.S. House.

Lawmakers by voice vote passed a measure that places 45,000 acres in trust for tribes in Humboldt, Washoe and Elko counties and for the Pyramid Lake Paiutes, whose land encompasses parts of Lyon, Washoe and Storey counties.

The bill also allows the sale of 275 acres to the city of Elko for a motocross park.

[Read the whole story](#)

What will GOP do with its new power in Nevada?

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval and Nevada's Republican Party will call the shots in the Legislature.

They will drive the hard decisions on the state's \$20 billion budget, Clark County's failing public school system and the rising costs of health care.

But the Republican Party also must deal with itself.

The GOP scored an Election Day victory that was as unexpected as it was unprecedented. The party united for the win but now must remain together during the legislative session. It won't be easy.

Ideologically, Nevada Republicans cover the spectrum.

Read the whole story

Full House proxy fight ends

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Veteran gaming executive Dan Lee was named CEO of regional casino operator Full House Resorts Monday, ending a two-month proxy fight for control of the Las Vegas-based company.

Full House owns three casinos: one in Indiana, one in Mississippi and the Stockman's Casino in Fallon. The company also manages the Grand Lodge Casino at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe under a lease agreement. In September, the company's management contract for an Indian casino in New Mexico ended.

Lee, who led an investor group that controlled 6.2 percent of Full House shares, wanted to increase the size of the board and direction of the company that operates three casinos and

manages a fourth.

Full House said CEO and Chairman Andre Hilliou will step down and the board will almost double to nine members.

Read the whole story