

Nevada GOP primary signals move to middle

By Scott Sonner, AP

RENO – Republican regulars are relishing what they view as a return to normalcy after mainstream candidates defeated more conservative primary challengers in their struggle with tea party activists for control of Nevada's GOP.

Political analysts said it won't be clear until November whether the results of Tuesday's primary were driven most by the hugely popular Gov. Brian Sandoval's coattails, the power of incumbency or a move toward moderation with fading support for the right wing's agenda.

The rift between the mainstream and the more conservative politicians who have assumed state GOP leadership positions was in the spotlight, most notably in the lieutenant governor's race, where Sandoval's backing helped carry Mark Hutchison past the GOP-endorsed Sue Lowden.

The governor's picks also prevailed in a key 4th District congressional primary where first-term Assemblyman Crescent Hardy defeated tea party strategist Niger Innis, and in the Legislature where Senate Minority Leader Michael Roberson of Henderson, Assembly Minority Leader Pat Hickey of Reno and assistant Senate floor leader Ben Kieckhefer of Reno all withstood anti-establishment challenges from the right.

"We saw races where conservatives were trying to prove they were more conservative, and in those elections, it did not go well for tea-party types," said Fred Lokken, a political science professor at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.

"It could be the first indications that Republican

conservatives are tiring of the fight," he said. "They may be realizing the split is providing far more damage than any benefit – that you either produce a weakened candidate more likely to lose to a Democratic challenger, or someone who does not work and play within the government process that elected them, and doesn't get anything done for the district or the state."

Republican angst had been growing in Nevada since tea party darling Sharron Angle beat Lowden and Danny Tarkanian for the GOP's U.S. Senate nomination in 2010 before losing to Democratic Sen. Harry Reid, 50 percent to 46 percent.

Mainstream GOP leaders like their prospects for unseating the U.S. Senate's majority leader much better if Sandoval takes him on in 2016. The governor insists he plans to serve a full four-year term if re-elected, but his impressive showing with 90 percent of the vote in Tuesday's primary will only encourage his cheerleaders.

"It is tough to get 90 percent even if you are running unopposed," said Eric Herzik, a political science professor at UNR.

Sandoval's popularity helped scare off serious Democratic challengers in an eight-candidate field, where relative unknown Bob Goodman claimed the nomination with 25 percent of the vote in an embarrassing primary where "none of these candidates" led with 30 percent.

Even Democrats at the polls voiced support for Sandoval.

"As a Democrat, I can't vote for Sandoval, but I feel he's doing a good job and I hope he continues," said Las Vegas resident Celso Adriano, 87, who is a World War II veteran. "I was watching what he's doing. ... He keeps good track of the budget."

Lokken said that should get the attention of state party

leaders, who last year elected Michael McDonald chairman over the Sandoval-backed Robert Uithoven, then later changed the party's endorsement process over the governor's objections.

"The primary was kind of a setback for the attitude the state GOP could go its own way. The governor is for all intents and purposes the leader of the party," Lokken said. "The message back to the state GOP is it probably should be working much harder to work with the sitting governor, who is very popular and pretty mainstream."

For his part, Nevada GOP chairman McDonald immediately issued a post-primary call for unity that he says is the key to winning in November "by practicing the politics of addition, not division."

"I urge you to end the Republican 'civil war' that is so often reported about," he said in an email to party members. "Now is the time that we must band together and truly become the Nevada Republican Party."

Herzik said it's too early to tell if the Republicans' internal wounds are healing. He also cautioned against reading too much into the tea party setbacks.

"If traditional Republicans overstate this, that it means they are not important, that would be a mistake," he said. Herzik said Hutchison and Hardy both were better-financed favorites in their races and the "conservative challenges to Roberson and Kieckhefer in particular, didn't have any legs."

"This kind of conservative backlash was louder than it was actual," Herzik said. "I don't think this election brought peace and harmony to the Republican Party. I don't think there is any guarantee that the disaffected conservative Republicans will fall in line and immediately back their fellow Republicans."

Credit union opening branch in S. Lake Tahoe

Sierra Central Credit Union will be opening a branch in South Lake Tahoe in September.

A company representative said they are hoping to hire four people locally.

The branch will be located in the shopping center on the corner of Ski Run Boulevard and Highway 50.

It will serve members acquired in the recent acquisition of 49er Federal Credit Union.

"We are planning to expand member eligibility to everyone who lives or works within 25 miles of the new branch," Pam Sweeney, with the credit union, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Travelers spend record sum in Calif. in '13

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

More than 235 million people – visitors and residents alike – traveled within California in 2013, spending an all-time record of \$109.6 billion, according to a report released by

Visit California, the nonprofit that helps develop the state's travel and tourism marketing programs.

Visit California said last year's travel-related spending generated \$2.8 billion in local tax revenues and \$4.3 billion in state tax revenues.

The report, compiled by Portland-based Dean Runyan Associates and commissioned by Visit California, also noted that the state's travel industry last year employed 965,800 people, the highest number since 1992, when employment data started being tallied.

"California tourism is on the rise, and that means new potential for creating jobs and increasing economic impact throughout the state," said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California, in a statement.

Read the whole story

Guilty plea in Thunder Valley Casino fraud case

By Denny Walsh and Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

High-flying developer Bart Wayne Volen pleaded guilty Thursday to three felonies in connection with a scheme that prosecutors say looted between \$17 million and \$19 million from the owners of Thunder Valley Casino near Lincoln.

Volen, 55, also agreed to pay restitution of at least \$17 million and to cooperate with federal prosecutors seeking convictions of two other men who are charged with helping him defraud the United Auburn Indian Community in an overbilling

rip-off involving a massive construction project.

Wearing a white dress shirt and khaki slacks, the once boisterous Volen spoke in a hushed voice Thursday before Judge Troy L. Nunley in U.S. District Court in Sacramento as he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, money laundering and filing a false tax return.

The plea deal obligates the government to recommend a sentence of up to nine years in prison and a \$15,000 fine, but the final outcome likely will hinge on the extent of Volen's cooperation against his co-defendants – former tribal administrator Greg Baker of Newcastle and construction project manager Darrell Hinz of Cameron Park.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe's 2 tourism agencies as unique as the destinations they represent



Emerald Bay is one icon all tourism agencies at Lake Tahoe promote. Photo/LTN file

Publisher's note: *This is this first of an occasional series of stories about the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association.*

By Anne Knowles

Last year's room nights on the South Shore were worth celebrating. After more than a decade of declines, save for a minor uptick a few years ago, room rentals were on the rise again, jumping 10 percent on the California side and almost 1 percent on the more active Nevada side between October 2012 and September 2013.

The new 12-month rolling year started auspiciously, too. In October 2013, room nights in California climbed about 11 percent to nearly 34,000 and just more than 9 percent to more than 45,000 in Nevada.

Then winter arrived. And the snow didn't follow. Room nights

started to fall, dropping in the California market by as much as 43 percent in January from the same month a year earlier.

The cumulative effect is that in the five months from October 2013 to February 2014, room nights throughout the South Shore of Lake Tahoe fell by almost 8 percent.

“Winter wasn’t good to us,” Carol Chaplin, executive director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The LTVA is one of two major organizations at the lake tasked with marketing the area, driving tourism and putting heads in beds.

The other is the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. The two divide the 72-mile shoreline into north and south, including a branding campaign that identifies the two Tahoe markets simply as North and South.

The LTVA and NLTRA are similar but different and cooperate and compete. And they are not always well understood by those who live at the lake who rely on tourism to drive their communities’ economy.

Both organizations, like the industry they serve, have evolved over the last decade.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Association

The LTVA, for example, no longer is financed by the city of South Lake Tahoe, which for years supported the LTVA through its general fund.



Room taxes from Stateline casinos are a substantial part of the LTVA's budget.
Photo/LTN file

"City of South Lake Tahoe historically funded LTVA through the (transient occupancy tax), but they kept reducing it and in 2008 the last \$350,000 was cut and the (Tourism Improvement District) was formed to replace the contribution," Chaplin explained.

The TID consists of all lodging businesses – hotels/motels, timeshares, condos, triplexes, duplexes and homes under management contracts – located within the city limits of South Lake Tahoe.

Initially, they were each assessed a flat rate per paid occupied room per night of \$2 on hotels and motels and \$3 per on timeshares, condos, triplexes, duplexes and homes. That recently was raised, through 2018, to \$3 and \$4.50 per night, respectively.

LTVA receives 95 percent of those fees, on a monthly basis, while the TID retains the remainder for special projects. For fiscal year 2015, that amounts to about \$1.8 million.

The other half of LTVA's budget – about \$2 million – comes from Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority, which was created in 1997 to levy a separate lodging tax for the benefit of the

Tahoe township, which is better known as Stateline. Those LTVA funds are made of 60 percent of the 10 percent room tax charged by the TDVA as well as two-thirds of an additional 3 percent lodging license fee the county began charging a few years ago.

The budget is divvied up between what LTVA calls sales, or promoting the destination internationally, usually through tour operators. The cost of some of that – in Australia, United Kingdom and France, specifically – is shared with NLTRA.

There's advertising and social media, which runs the gamut from TV ads running on Comcast during Oakland A's games to its website.

The LTVA and NLTRA share a single-page website that links back to their respective and separate websites.

All advertising decisions are made by the LTVA board based on recommendations from its marketing committee. That committee recently expanded from seven to 11 members. It is comprised of members from ski resorts, casinos, condos, marketing firms and Barton Health.

"A lot of the roll-up-your-sleeves work is done at that level," Chaplin said.

The seven-member LTVA board, which has public monthly meetings, consists of two representatives appointed by the TID (currently Chairman Patrick Ronan and Jerry Bindel), two placed by TDVA (Bryan Davis with Edgewood and Harrah's/Harveys Lake Tahoe's John Koster), a South Lake Tahoe City Council member (Tom Davis), a member chosen by the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce (Heavenly Mountain Resort's Peter Sonntag) and the district's Douglas County commissioner (Nancy McDermid).

There are no term limits, but the members from the TID and

chamber, Chaplin said, tend to serve for the same period they serve on the boards they are appointed from.

Finally, there are events, including the American Century Championship celebrity tournament at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course each July. Chaplin said the LTVA, though, is in the process of reevaluating its event strategy since the recent brouhaha over the Fourth of July fireworks display, which unexpectedly cost the organization approximately \$33,000 in legal fees.

“It’s changed the way we look at our involvement with events producers. We’ll be spending more on legal contracts and consultants. We’re rethinking how we’re going with fireworks,” said Chaplin. “But we heard the message loud and clear from the community that it is a big event for us.”

The LTVA may also pull back on small grants to other events for help with their marketing, a decision that will be made after this month’s board meeting.

“We are asked a lot to bring large events here, but we don’t have the infrastructure to support them,” Chaplin said.

North Lake Tahoe Resort Association

Infrastructure is one key way the LTVA and the NLTRA differ.



This is one of the ads created for North Lake Tahoe by School of Thought.

NLTRA is tasked with, and has a specific funding source, for transportation and infrastructure projects. NLTRA recommends the work to the Placer County Board of Supervisors which approves it. That's funded by an additional 2 percent TOT approved by voters through 2022.

Overall, NLTRA receives 60 percent of TOT collected in eastern Placer County. In 2013-14, the group's budget was \$4.4 million from TOT, minus about \$1.5 million which is set aside for county services.

NLTRA once adhered to a spending formula that was replaced in 2012 with a "priority-based" method, but it still spends about 42 percent on marketing and 58 percent on transportation and infrastructure, said Sandy Evans Hall, chief executive officer/executive director.

NLTRA, formed in 1995 after a master plan study of tourism recommended it, comprises two entities: the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Tahoe North Visitors and Convention Bureau.

"We have three functions," Hall told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The chamber, the visitors' bureau and making recommendations on transportation and infrastructure."

Like the LTVA, the NLTRA has a board, which has final say over marketing and advertising campaigns brought to it by a marketing committee.

The NLTRA outsources to two outside agencies – School of Thought in San Francisco and the Abbi Agency in Reno – to develop advertising and public relations campaigns.

"The staff works with the agencies, tells them here's what we want to do, we give them the budget and they come back," Hall said. "Then the NLTRA board has the final say."

Nine members of the 11-member board are elected by NLTRA membership. They run to represent different categories such large lodging, small lodging or dining, serve on the board for three years and are limited to two terms. The other two members are appointed without term limits as is a third, non-voting member.

The committees are appointed by the board and besides the 13-member marketing panel, there are groups that advise the board on lodging, membership, finance, infrastructure/transportation and group sales.

The NLTRA also works closely with the Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Authority under an agreement forged six years ago, which created the North Lake Tahoe Marketing Coop, which is intricately involved in marketing decisions made by NLTRA.

“Six years ago we sat down and decided had competing messages,” said Hall. “We said we should market as one destination.”

Study: Calif. could have surplus of water

By Justin Doom, Bloomberg

Drought-stricken California has more than twice the water capacity needed to erase an annual deficit of more than 6 million acre-feet, through better conservation and management efforts, according to the Pacific Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Almost half of the potential 13.7 million acre-feet in savings

could come from agricultural efficiency gains and conservation, with the balance from urban improvements, water reuse and captured storm water, the two groups said in a joint report this week.

One acre-foot is enough to cover an acre with a foot of water, approximately 326,000 gallons.

Read the whole story

Novasel, Curtzwiler in lead for EDC supe race

The November runoff for El Dorado County supervisor District 5 seat has changed.

As of 5pm June 12 the top two vote getters are Sue Novasel and Kenny Curtzwiler. The top two will face each other in November.

Novasel retains a resounding lead as she did on election day, June 3. She currently has 28.51 percent of the votes or 1,556 votes. Rounding out the vote are:

- Curtzwiler – 17.83 percent, 973
- Angela Swanson – 17.68 percent, 965
- Kevin Brown – 17.61 percent, 961
- Gerri Grego – 12.48 percent, 681
- Teresa Piper – 5.64 percent, 308.

These are still not final numbers.

Obama signs \$12.3 bil. water projects bill

By Jim Kuhnhenh, AP

WASHINGTON – Capping a rare instance of congressional compromise, President Obama signed a \$12.3 billion water projects bill Tuesday, financing improvements ranging from a harbor expansion in Boston to flood control in Iowa and North Dakota.

Obama praised the work of Democrats and Republicans and said he hoped it set a pattern for agreement for more spending on capital works projects across the country.

“Right now we should be putting a lot more Americans back to work rebuilding our infrastructure,” he said. “There are a lot of guys with hardhats sitting at home.”

The new law will pay for 34 new projects over the next 10 years. Its price tag is half the amount of the last water projects bill seven years ago. Congressional leaders have praised the bill for containing no pet projects from lawmakers, the kind of targeted, congressionally directed spending that had angered the public and helped fuel the tea party movement.

All of the projects were recommended by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Obama singled out the bill’s main negotiators – Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer of California and Republican Sen. David

Vitter of Louisiana, Republican Rep. Bill Schuster of Pennsylvania and Democrat Nick Rahall of West Virginia.

“They set aside politics, they focused on what was important for the country and what was important for their communities,” he said. “And as a consequence we have a piece of legislation that is really going to make a good difference.”

He urged lawmakers to use the same spirit of compromise to act on a massive transportation bill. He warned that without action, 100,000 projects could come to a standstill, affecting 700,000 jobs.

“The fact that this bill received some bipartisan support I think hopefully sets a pattern for additional work,” he said.

Though some conservative groups argued the bill still contained unnecessary spending, it had broad support from state and local officials and business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Blown transformer causes outage at Northstar

Power is expected to be out for many Northstar residents for the next few hours.

A transformer blew and is not expected to be fixed until about 5pm June 11.

Lean retirement looms for Gen X

By Jeanna Smialek, Bloomberg

Vera Johnson from Seattle is barely making do, let alone saving for retirement.

"I try to remain in the present moment and not live in fear of the future," said Johnson, who has neither retirement savings nor a college fund for her two children. "My property is underwater, the properties around me are underwater, I'm not building equity in my home."

The 45-year-old almost lost her home to foreclosure in 2010 after the housing-market collapse in the worst recession since World War II. She embodies the financial challenges facing America's Generation X, those born between the mid-1960s and 1980, which lags behind other generations in building assets.

Good timing is not the age group's forte. Many took out mortgages just before prices plunged, making them the most disadvantaged by the housing crisis, while the 2008 stock-market slump dealt them a further setback. Only one-third of Generation X households have more wealth than their parents, even though most earn more, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts.

When their working years end, Gen-Xers might have to live on just half of their pre-retirement income, compared with 60 percent for the Baby Boom generation, Pew said last year.

"Generation X is at this really critical historical spot," said Diana Elliott, a research officer in financial security

and mobility at Pew, a nonprofit global research and public policy organization in Washington. “They are not doing well relative to the last generation. It should give us concern as a country.”

Read the whole story