

Expanded transitional K left out of Brown's budget

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown's revised budget omits funding for Democrats' top priority this year: expanding transitional kindergarten, the public school program to ready 4-year-olds for the rigors of elementary school.

With rosy revenue projections, Brown would focus education dollars on repaying money the state borrowed from school districts during the Great Recession and on shoring up the teachers' pension system.

California's spending on pre-kindergarten to 12th grade would jump 8.4 percent, from \$70 billion this school year to \$75.9 billion in 2014-15 — even as enrollment is expected to decline slightly, by 0.1 percent. Of that total, more than \$45 billion would come from the state's general fund, with federal revenues, local property taxes and Lottery proceeds contributing most of the rest.

Brown's revised budget released Tuesday proposes accelerating the repayment schedule of \$6.2 billion owed to schools, so that it all would be repaid by the end of the 2014-15 school year. The state had borrowed the money by deferring payments it owed school districts.

Read the whole story

60 years after Brown v. Board of Education the fight goes on

By Sherrilyn Ifill, MSNBC

May 17 marks the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education, the constitutional moment that compelled our country to reckon with its history and confront the unfulfilled promise of equality first articulated in our founding documents.

Brown literally changed America. It was a mid-20th century course correction that ushered in a modern America that must grapple honestly with the promise of equality and opportunity for all its citizens.

At its core, Brown marks the beginning of the end of legal apartheid in this country. This would be enough to celebrate. But Brown is also a powerful example of how change can happen and the important role that law plays in shaping the very character of our country.

Within 15 years of the Court's decision in Brown, segregation had been declared illegal in almost every aspect of American life, from the school house to swimming pools, golf courses to public transportation and housing. These changes were not brought about by lawyers alone. The broad civil rights movement that began the year after Brown reflected a powerful demand for full citizenship for blacks throughout the South. But Brown also deployed our nation's most coveted assets – our Constitution and the rule of law – to articulate and enforce the principle of equality.

Read the whole story

Death penalty sought in killing of Tahoe man, 2 others

By Charlie Brennan, Boulder Camera

Prosecutors will seek the death penalty against one of three men charged in a February 2013 triple murder that claimed the life of three men, the Sonoma County district attorney announced.

Investigators allege that Mark Cappello, 47, of Central City, Colo., was the triggerman in a marijuana deal gone awry. Cappello is charged with first-degree murder.

Todd Klarkowski, 43, of Boulder, Colo., was shot and killed execution-style along with Raleigh Butler, 24, of North Lake Tahoe, and Richard Lewin, 46, of Huntington, N.Y., in the Sonoma County home of Butler's mother, who was out of state at the time.

[Read the whole story](#)

Chase ends with suspected bank robber in custody

A Carson City man was arrested Friday morning in connection to a bank robbery in Kings Beach.

Brent Muir, 55, allegedly walked into the Plumas Bank about 8:30am May 16 with a handgun and left with an undisclosed amount of cash.

The suspect fled in a tan 2008 Chevrolet Impala headed toward Sand Harbor, where he was spotted by federal law enforcement. Nevada Highway Patrol officers then tried to stop him. Douglas and Carson City sheriff's deputies then joined the chase.

Muir led officers through parts of south Carson City before he stopped his vehicle at the corner of California Street and Industrial Park Drive just south of Fairview Drive. He then fled on foot.

A Douglas deputy caught up to him. NHP booked Muir on felony eluding, reckless driving, and driving with no valid driver's license charges.

Officers said a weapon and suspected money was found inside the vehicle.

Charges stemming from the robbery are pending further investigation from the FBI and Placer County Sheriff's Office.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Compromise federal water bill unveiled

By Henry C. Jackson, AP

WASHINGTON – House and Senate negotiators on Thursday unveiled a compromise bill that authorizes billions of dollars for water projects over the next decade, from flood protections in

California to deepening Georgia's rapidly growing Port of Savannah.

Lawmakers released details of the Water Resources Reform and Development act a week after they announced a tentative agreement on legislation that blends House and Senate versions of the bill. The legislation will authorize 34 projects in virtually every region of the country. Lawmakers say it provides important investment in the nation's water infrastructure.

"This legislation is about jobs and our country's economic prosperity, and I look forward to bringing to back to the House for a final vote," said Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, who filed the bill Thursday.

The proposed investments include projects related to both expansion and flood protection.

The bill sanctions more than \$748 million in federal funds for dredging and widening of the Sabine-Neches Waterway, an area billed as "America's Energy Gateway" because the roughly 80-mile waterway services oil and natural gas refineries in Texas and Louisiana. The legislation also authorizes as much as \$800 million for a flood diversion project that would protect the Red River Valley region of North Dakota and parts of Minnesota, which have suffered major floods in four of the past five years.

The Senate passed its version of the bill roughly a year ago, with the House following suit in October. Since then, lawmakers have been working to thrash out differences between the two bills. The Senate's version would authorize about \$12.5 billion over the next decade, while the House's version would cost about \$8.2 billion. The compromise is expected to land somewhere in between the two, but a Congressional Budget Office estimate was not yet available.

Lawmakers have expressed a pent up demand for a water projects bill. Congress last authorized a bill in 2007 and many lawmakers have said they feared the U.S. was falling behind in its water infrastructure.

Congress would have to pass separate legislation to pay for all of the projects included in the bill.

The House is expected to vote on the bill as early as Tuesday, with the Senate following suit. Both versions of the bill easily passed previously. With the estimated cost of the bill expected to rise, though, there is some concern that more conservative Republicans might vote against it. Outside groups, including Heritage Action, have said the bill does not do enough to rein in spending.

But businesses groups – and many lawmakers – have called both versions of the bill a potential jobs engine, citing the investment in infrastructure. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has also lobbied lawmakers in both houses to pass the bill, saying it will ensure that American businesses stay competitive.

“Legislation to improve the nation’s marine transportation system is long overdue and will grow jobs, boost international trade ... and strengthen America’s competitive edge,” said Janet Kavinsky, the executive director transportation and infrastructure with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

One effort to try to keep conservative lawmakers on board is preserved in the compromise. Addressing past concerns that water projects bills were loaded with favors for lawmakers’ districts and states, the compromise legislation eliminates roughly \$18 billion in dormant projects that were authorized prior to 2007.

The bill also sets specific time and cost limits for studies on potential projects, eliminates duplicative reviews and includes language that speeds up the environmental review process for projects.

The compromise legislation will also increase spending from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which will be used to fund improvements to ports and creates a five-year pilot program to provide loans and loan guarantees for various water projects.

Plastic bag ban working in South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

If the number of people who showed up at a meeting this week about South Lake Tahoe's plastic bag ban is an indication of it how it is working, it's working well.

Four members of the public attended the May 14 meeting to talk about what is working and what isn't. Mayor Hal Cole and Councilmember JoAnn Conner were also in attendance. City Attorney Tom Watson ran the meeting.

On this same day a state Assembly panel moved forward a proposal to ban plastic bags throughout California.

The ban for South Lake Tahoe grocery stores started in mid-January, while others will not be able to hand out the one-time use bags starting Oct. 15.

Connie Hinton, who owns a thrift store in town, worries about what will happen when she is no longer allowed to package people's goods in plastic bags. She said it would have an economic impact.

Today she is given bags from customers – plastic and paper – that she reuses for other customers. She would still be able to use the paper.

Hinton said there is a bit of inequity in that the Attic, another thrift store, will be able to use plastic bags in the future because it is a nonprofit.

Nonprofits are exempt from the bag ban. However, it is still impacting them. Bread & Broth used to have a plethora of grocery store plastic bags to fill with goods for people to take with them at the end of the meal. Now the group is relying on other businesses to donate bags, such as Heavenly Sports and Michael's.

Priscilla Rohrich's problem with the ban is that she said it isn't helping the environment because people are buying boxes of plastic bags to line their garbage cans instead using a bag that once held groceries. She has a problem with corporations benefiting from South Lake Tahoe's decision.

Karen Fink, who was instrumental in bringing the bag ban to the council, said she finds no need to buy bags. Her family has found ways to use bags from cereal boxes, bread and other items in lieu of the grocery store plastic bags.

Councilmember Conner made the false comment that some stores have stopped charging for paper.

When Fink asked her which stores, Conner snidely said, "You are going to have to figure that out yourself."

So, *Lake Tahoe News* did. What was discovered is Conner was lying. Raley's charges 5 cents for paper, Safeway 10 cents for paper, and Grocery Outlet 5 cents for paper and 10 cents for reusable plastic bags.

The four major grocery stores in the city limits (there are two Raley's) all say the ban wasn't welcome at first, but now customers have gotten used to it.

Victor Guerrero at the Raley's near Stateline told *Lake Tahoe News* people even sued the chain because of the policy. The

store prevailed.

"It's working. People are slowly remembering their bags," Guerrero said of people using reusable bags.

A Safeway clerk said a good number of people bring their own bags, while others pay for paper.

Conner also said there has been more shoplifting with people filling reusable bags or walking out with carts full of goods. None of the above mentioned stores mentioned this as a problem to *Lake Tahoe News*.

The council is expected to discuss the plastic bag ban at the June 17 meeting.

Nutting not guilty of felonies, guilty of misdemeanors

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting was found not guilty today on three felony charges of political malfeasance, but was convicted of six misdemeanors for improperly raising bail to free himself from jail.

The charges stemmed from income Nutting received from a state fire safety program for clearing brush on his ranch. Prosecutors alleged that Nutting failed to disclose tens of thousands of dollars, faced a conflict of interest when he voted to fund local resource agencies and took illegal loans from government employees to post bail.

Though the El Dorado Superior Court jury in Placerville found Nutting not guilty on three felonies, it was hung on a fourth felony count alleging that Nutting fabricated documents related to herbicide treatment for which he was reimbursed by the state.

Had Nutting been convicted of a felony, he would have had to relinquish his county supervisor post under state law. After the verdict, Nutting walked from his defendant's chair into the courtroom gallery, hugged his wife and cried.

Read the whole story

Fire season comes early to California

By AP

After months of warning that drought-stricken California is facing a potentially devastating wildfire season, officials are telling residents it's time to get serious about clearing brush from backyards, creating evacuation plans and exercising caution with equipment that can throw sparks.

CalFire declared fire season open in most of Northern California on Monday and planned to extend the designation to the rest of the North State next week. That is about a month earlier than normal and a reflection of the kindling-like conditions on moisture-deprived hillsides and in forests packed with dead greenery, agency spokesman Daniel Berlant said Saturday.

The official start of the fire season means staffing levels

will remain at their peak and firefighting aircraft on standby until the heightened danger subsides, he said.

In Southern California, the fire season is already underway because the agency never ended the one that started in 2013, Berlant said.

State fire officials have been gearing up since January by slowly adding more temporary firefighters in the central and northern parts of California.

State water managers conducted their final survey of the Sierra Nevada snowpack on May 1 and found it was at 18 percent of average for the date. The snowpack accounts for about one-third of the state's water.

"There is no doubt that the drought has left the grasses and the brush very dry and that has really set the stage for a very busy fire season," Berlant said.

CalFire crews already have responded to nearly 1,300 wildfires across the state in 2014, more than twice as many as usual for this time of year.

Inspectors have started visiting fire-prone areas to remind property owners to remove branches, weeds and leaves from around their homes, but not to use lawn mowers, trimmers or power tools that could ignite a blaze after 10am.

EDC takes corrective action regarding bullied workers

After a scathing report came out about how employees in El Dorado County feel about their workplace, the Board of

Supervisors unanimously voted May 13 to direct staff to implement a plan to turn things around.

The survey revealed significant concerns regarding “bullying, harassment, and retaliation.”

Customer service training is planned for county leadership and staff, along with more robust new supervisor orientations and orientations for the seven other elected department head positions, along with building internal awareness regarding policies and procedures, counseling/coaching, and enhancing employee communication.

An Executive Management Advisory Committee will review existing policies, practices, leadership challenges and recommend changes. Leadership criticisms will be addressed and where appropriate misconduct will be investigated, according to the county. The goal is departments that received low satisfaction levels from employees will receive immediate intervention.

There will also be a management audit of the Human Resources and Auditor-Controller’s offices.

Employees will be able to submit specific complaints, using a new Respectful Workplace Form 111.

Tuesday’s vote allocated up to \$250,000 to be spent implementing the plan, including hiring neutral third party consultants to conduct investigations, provide training, coaching and internal support.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Brown unveils 'good news' budget

By Josh Richman, Jessica Calefati and Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown said today that his revised budget proposal is “good news for California,” paying down \$11 billion in debt while for the first time setting the state “on a plan to fully fund our teachers’ pension system.”

But saving money for harder times remains a priority, he said. Brown stood flanked by charts, one of which showed that “balanced budgets have quickly been followed by huge deficits” and the other depicting how unpredictable capital-gains tax revenue — one of the state’s most important and most volatile funding sources — can be from year to year.

“Most of that is paid by the most fortunate among us,” Brown said. “That variability has to be captured in the rainy-day fund.”

And costs of new Medi-Cal enrollment under the nation’s new health care law increased by \$1 billion just from January to May, Brown noted. That, he said, is another argument for having deep reserves.

Read the whole story