

Gas prices on the upswing

By Shan Li, Los Angeles Times

Problems at some of the state's fuel refineries have sent gasoline prices soaring in California just in time for the kickoff of the busy driving season.

A gallon of regular gasoline hit a statewide average of \$4.196 on Thursday, up about 13 cents in a week, according to AAA. That's the highest price since March 2013.

The U.S. average of \$3.657 is up less than a nickel from the previous Thursday.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe motorcyclist seriously injured

By KTVN-TV

California Highway Patrol says a motorcyclist suffered major injuries after hitting a truck on Highway 182 near Bridgeport Friday afternoon.

Troopers say the 61-year-old South Lake Tahoe man was riding a 2002 Harley-Davidson south when he let his bike cross the double-yellow line hitting the left rear of a 2000 Ford F250 pickup, about eight miles north of Bridgeport.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe driver involved in fatal accident

By Stockton Record

A 3-year-old girl was killed after being ejected from a car during a crash on northbound Highway 99 near Hammer Lane in Stockton on Friday, the California Highway Patrol said.

The child's mother, Maria Romero, 32, of Atwater, was driving a 2000 Isuzu sport utility vehicle north on Highway 99 at 12:45pm when it crashed for unknown reasons with a 2012 Toyota two-door vehicle. The vehicles veered onto the northwest shoulder of the road, where the Isuzu rolled over. The 3-year-old girl, who was not restrained properly, was ejected, CHP Officer James Smith said.

The Toyota was driven by Andre Peterson, 48, of South Lake Tahoe. He and passenger Linda Fischer, 52, were uninjured, Smith said.

Read the whole story

KGID gearing up to put in pipes, repave

Kingsbury General Improvement District is planning to put in 2,600 lineal feet of PVC pipe, service lines, air release valves and fire hydrants this summer.

The project will also include 68,100 feet of pavement on Beverly Road and Virginia Drive.

The Stateline project is expected to cost \$665,000.

Bids are being taken until May 8. Awarding of the contract is expected a week later. Construction could begin June 2.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Pierini: ‘I have decades of hard-earned experience’



Ron Pierini

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the three Douglas County sheriff's candidates a series of questions. The responses are running in the order they were received. All but one question is the same.*

Name: Ron Pierini

Age: 62

Occupation: Sheriff, Douglas County

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: Kiwanis, Minden/Douglas Elks, Nevada Department of Wildlife Hunter Safety Education, Carson Valley Chukar Club/ Wildlife Conservation, Tahoe-Douglas Rotary Club, Austin's House, Ducks Unlimited, International Footprint Association, Suicide Prevention Network, Partnership for Community Resources and Operation Game Thief.

In Tahoe during the morning commute there are often multiple deputies out on Highway 50. How is enforcing speed the best use of limited resources?: Our statistics and records will show that deputies perform a variety of duties that are spread fairly evenly throughout our jurisdiction in the Tahoe basin. An important aspect of their duties is traffic enforcement on Highway 50. Traffic issues and dangerous drivers are the leading source of complaints and reports from our citizens. The accidents and resulting injuries and deaths on Highway 50 do show it has been and remains, a public safety concern, particularly during the peak tourist season in summer, and during the hazardous weather and road conditions of winter. Traffic enforcement (including speeding) is a proven mechanism to nip many larger issues in the bud. Such issues include accidents, impaired drivers, and dangerous drivers that end up requiring many public safety resources to respond to. I am committed to the safety of our residents and visitors, and traffic enforcement is an important aspect of that commitment.

When the South Shore is busy rental units often have so many vehicles they spillover onto the streets to create a problem for locals and pose a safety issue. Currently, nothing is being done about this issue. What do you think should be done to address this ongoing issue?: Rental properties, and the subsequent impact of their use to full-time residents has always been an issue in the Tahoe basin. My staff and I have met with several of the GIDs and homeowner groups to discuss their concerns and respond within our ability and existing laws. Our office does respond to, and take enforcement action

on noise complaints, public drunkenness, disorderly conduct and other misdemeanor offenses that are routinely associated with this issue. We also enforce parking violations that occur in fire and snow removal zones. However, we do not have the authority to regulate the amount of vehicles parked in a lawful manner, or to whom or how a residence is leased. Perhaps it is possible to improve the regulation of rental units. I assume that the various homeowner associations could review and revise applicable CC&Rs and work with their appointed representatives. Together they could consider county ordinances that may be drafted or modified to address the matter.

Do you believe it's better for the head of a law enforcement agency to come from inside or outside the department? Why?: I believe it is better for the CEO of a law enforcement agency to come from within the department. If you look at agencies across the country, there is more success and stability when the chief or sheriff knows the agency, the people, and the community. That person has an intimate knowledge of the agency when they have risen through the ranks, worked the various positions, and understand the relationships and personalities. Each agency is different and this unique experiential knowledge just cannot be obtained any other way. Such a leader has a deeply vested interest in keeping the agency viable and successful.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: I want to continue being sheriff of Douglas County Sheriff's Office because I believe in our mission as a department and in my own calling to serve and protect the community of Douglas County. I consider DCSO and the entire community of Douglas as an extension of my own "family". I want to keep Douglas County a safe place to live. I have a personal stake in DCSO and in the community of Douglas.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: Because, unlike the other candidates, I have decades of hard-earned

experience and an indisputable track record that is all uniquely specific to the office I am running for.

What is your stand on medical marijuana? What kind of enforcement issue would that present for the department?: My personal position on medical marijuana is irrelevant because medical marijuana is a constitutional right in the state of Nevada. Our eligible citizens may cultivate, possess and use medical marijuana in accordance with the applicable laws. As the elected sheriff, I am sworn to uphold and defend that right. Our agency has not experienced any enforcement issues with medical marijuana users. We have had people using the drug illegally, under the guise of medical marijuana, but those cases are easy to identify and address because the law is very clear.

What do you believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: Open and frank communication, a cooperative attitude and work ethic, and a sense of community-oriented government have been my cornerstones of success with our elected Board of Commissioners. During my tenure as sheriff, I have always enjoyed a productive relationship with every commissioner.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: The fiscal budget for 2012-13 required we make a \$450,000 reduction, so unfortunately we have "real world experience" in how a 10 percent budget reduction would be accomplished. About 87 percent of our budget is comprised of salary and benefits, which is standard in any service-related industry, so despite deep cuts to service and supplies, ancillary programs, and a 5 percent salary reduction, which the unions graciously volunteered to do, we still had to eliminate four positions to meet the FY12-13 mandate. A 10 percent reduction in our budget equals approximately \$1.5 million, and the only way to meet that mandate would be the elimination of about 15 positions. Union contracts require that the last 15 persons hired would

be laid off. Subsequent transfers and adjustments to remaining staff are also governed by union contract.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: We enjoy a fabulous relationship with the businesses at Lake Tahoe who work with my staff at the various events throughout the year. We regularly meet before, during, and after all events to identify and address concerns and issues. I encourage you to contact Edgewood regarding the Celebrity Golf Classic, or Harrah's/Harveys regarding the summer outdoor concert series, I am confident they share my positive outlook on our relationship.

The sheriff's department has always refused to make the New Year's Eve celebration at Stateline a sanctioned or permitted event. The casinos have asked for this and have wanted to expand the festivities, but DCSO says no. Do you believe this is a good policy? Why or why not? And how would you address it?: Special events in Lake Tahoe require significant coordination to ensure they are safe and enjoyable. DCSO is not in charge of sanctioning such events; rather DCSO's role is to provide law enforcement to ensure the public is safe. Sanctioning would have to be approved by the board of county commissioners, and permitting must be approved by the state of Nevada, as Highway 50 is a state highway. I support this cooperation so the public and businesses can directly petition the board of county commissioners who oversee the sanctioning and permitting of special events. This last New Year's Eve, the Horizon Casino was the first entity that hosted a recognized event on New Year's Eve. They applied for, and received a permit from the clerk treasurer's office for the "Summer Winter Action Tours" festival. My staff worked closely with the casino and the event organizer and provided the security they requested from DCSO.

You have been with DCSO for decades. Why do you believe it's

not time for change in leadership at the top?: I have been in the position of sheriff at DCSO for only 16 years. During this time, through retirements and promotions, our command staff has seen a number of new faces. And when I say "new" I mean new to command staff, not new to DCSO. Each one of our command staff has been here for years, working their way up the ranks. Whether it is personnel, management styles, operations techniques things are constantly changing at the command level. This constant, upward evolution is one of the keys to running a successful department. We are always changing at the top.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees? Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Our officers do make less than SLTPD and EDSO, but our recruitment competition is in the Reno area market, and those agencies also make more money, so yes, it does hamper recruitment and retention. I support our officers making a wage that is competitive with the agencies that we compete against in recruitment. Under Nevada law, I do not have the authority to provide them any wage increase, or decrease. Wage and benefit increases for our officers are governed under N.R.S. 288 that provides for collective bargaining. DCSO has three different collective bargaining units (employee unions). Those unions negotiate with the County Commission for wage and benefit matters.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: Due to the reductions of FY12-13 our staffing levels are tight, but we are maintaining excellent service levels, a high crime resolution rate, and one of the lowest crime rates in Nevada. Our tentative budget for FY14-15 sees the return of three deputy positions to our agency, so we will have some relief to our personnel resources. Our

personnel have some of the best equipment available and DCSO is a leader in technology in Nevada, so our immediate needs are in good shape. I am glad to add that because of sound planning our future looks bright as well.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: Nevada is experiencing a recovery to the economic crisis. The biggest issue facing DCSO, and law enforcement in general, is to continue to serve the public in the most efficient manner possible despite such tough economic times. So while there is recovery, it is slow and will take longer than in other areas of the country, therefore we must plan accordingly. We must be ever diligent in the recruitment and retention of good personnel, the prudent purchase of good equipment, and to maximize the return on our technology investments. I have a very experienced and motivated staff and I am confident we will continue to serve our citizens well.

What is one do-over you would like to have in terms of a professional decision you have made?: Like any tenured leader, there are decisions that did not succeed as I had hoped, but I have always looked to the future, learned from my mistakes and moved on. Most critical DCSO decisions are made collectively by highly educated, highly dedicated command staff that all share the same core philosophy of being honest and doing the right thing, even if it isn't necessarily the popular thing. This method has proven to help us (and me) avoid the desire for "do-overs" when it comes to decisions. I am fortunate that in my 16 years as sheriff none of my decisions have had a negative impact or effect on public safety, or the confidence our community has on our organization.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: I enjoy being with my family; we spend a great deal of time being outdoors including camping, fishing, hiking and hunting. I also very much enjoy volunteering for nonprofit organizations. Recently, my wife and I discovered a love of

“attempted” landscaping in our yard, but this is a definite work in progress, to say the least.

Nevada adopts rules for high school graduation

By Paul Takahashi, Las Vegas Sun

Current eighth- and ninth-graders won't have to pass new exams in math, reading and writing to graduate from high school, Nevada's K-12 education leaders decided Thursday.

Earlier this year, the Nevada State Board of Education began phasing out the current High School Proficiency Exam in favor of new assessments aligned with more rigorous academic standards, called the Common Core State Standards.

State lawmakers have mandated that starting with the current crop of freshmen (class of 2017), students must take four end-of-course exams in algebra I, geometry, reading and writing to graduate.

However, the Nevada Education Department wants to “field-test” these new end-of-course exams – essentially test the new tests before fully adopting them. The field tests would help ensure the test results are valid.

Read the whole story

Nutting trial has far-reaching political ramifications

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Ray Nutting goes on trial for felony malfeasance Tuesday, and the political rancor is seething in El Dorado County.

In the courtroom, Nutting, a four-term county supervisor, faces prosecution for alleged misconduct related to state grants he took for clearing brush on his family ranch. But it is the spectacle surrounding his case that envelops this county east.

The prosecution of the veteran timber rancher, a stout defender of private property rights and a hero to tea party conservatives, is revealing angry divisions within the local Republican Party faithful and deep-rooted antagonisms in a county long known for its bare-knuckled politics.

In typically procedural court documents, District Attorney Vern Pierson and his top prosecutor call Nutting a "hypocrite" and blast him for supporting "puppet candidates" for office and directing "underhanded efforts ... to try his case in the media."

In turn, Nutting ripped the prosecutor, saying, "Pierson is ruthless and will stoop to the lowest levels" to destroy his enemies.

The trial has been preceded by months of angry theatrics as Nutting supporters have jammed meetings of the Board of Supervisors, protesting what they consider "bullying" tactics of a powerful county auditor-controller, Joe Harn, who triggered the prosecution by alerting the district attorney to

alleged discrepancies in Nutting's invoices for state-funded work on his ranch.

Critics of the supervisor, who has recused himself from virtually every board action since his indictment, are calling on him to step down. Meanwhile, divisions over the trial permeate county election races.

The actual legal proceedings, *People of the State of California v. Raymond James Nutting*, will take place at the turn-of-the-century courthouse in Old Placerville. A retired state appellate judge from outside the county, Timothy S. Buckley, will preside over the trial because El Dorado judges recused themselves from the case.

Read the whole story

Predominant way to lure tourists is with photos

By Kathryn Reed

Eye candy – it's what people are looking for first when they start thinking about a vacation.

That is in large part why websites like Instagram and Pinterest are so popular. And those are the social media venues millennials are using in greater numbers than Twitter and Facebook.

People want to see pictures of pretty places and people doing the things they want to be doing while on vacation. And photos – even videos – of hotels (inside and out) are ways to get people to book a room.



Carol Chaplin with the LTVA
and B Gorman of the chamber
talk tourism on April 15.
Photo/Lesia Witkowsky

All of this information was dispensed at the annual tourism conference April 15 that was put on by Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. More than 70 people attended the event at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe.

Michael Thomas with Nobel Studios talked about five technology trends that will impact travel. His company created LTVA's website nearly three years ago so it would be photo-centric, include blogs from people playing on the South Shore, events and more. It has content from the visitors authority and from users.

The trends are:

- People are starting their travel itinerary with visuals. "We as a destination need to make sure we have photos on the web," Thomas said.
- People are going to travel to eat. Thomas said there are people who deliberately travel for food, some who are opportunistic by finding good places to eat when they get there, and others who are accidental. "If you can talk farm to fork, and about wine and beer your area produces, you will get the deliberate traveler," Thomas said. No one in the audience

is a member of the World Food Travel Association, which he said offers certification for restaurants.

- People will stay in homes more than hotels. Airbnb usage is skyrocketing. Thomas said the valuation of the home rental site is at \$10 billion. This compares to Hyatt at \$8.43 billion and Wyndham at \$9.39 billion.

- Hotels will be more photogenic. Thomas said it is imperative hotels create a visual experience.

- Hotels will be renting workspace. “It is really, really not a good strategy” to charge for Wi-Fi, Thomas said. In today’s world people expect to work on vacation. Even leisure hotels are starting to provide people space to work outside their hotel room.

Other speakers included Eric Dunn with Duncan-Channon. That firm does the ad campaign for LTVA. Water sports will be a big part of the summer promotion.

Carol Chaplin, who heads the LTVA, and B Gorman, the chamber’s leader, spoke of a recent excursion to Park City to learn about how that mountain town is able to attract visitors.

Reliable transportation with drivers who are more like tour guides, culinary options that range from one to five stars, public art and responsive government are the four main things they and others who traveled to Utah took away from the experience.

Suspected drug lab blows up

in Truckee

A house in Truckee was destroyed Wednesday when a drug lab blew up, according to police officers.

Douglas Hall, 54, received burns to his face and hands, according to police. His girlfriend and daughter were not injured.

Hall faces charges of suspicion of possession of concentrated cannabis, manufacturing controlled substances with chemicals and felony child endangerment.

“Investigation revealed the blast was the result of a butane honey oil extraction process that went awry,” officers said in a statement. The explosion was reported at 4:44pm April 16.

Officers found more than 1,000 empty cans of butane, police said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nearly half of voters open to changing Prop. 13

By Jessica Calefati, Contra Costa Times

SACRAMENTO – Proposition 13’s restrictions on property tax growth have been untouchable in California politics for almost 40 years, but a new Field Poll shows about half of voters are open to tweaking the landmark measure.

Asked in a general way if they favor making some changes, 49

percent of registered voters said they supported the idea, while 34 percent are opposed, the poll found.

Deciding how to alter California's rigid tax rules is the multimillion-dollar question. The Field Poll found far less consensus around a proposal to reduce the threshold needed to boost local taxes from a two-thirds majority to 55 percent. Only 39 percent of voters said they support that idea, and Republicans are strongly opposed, with 67 percent disapproving.

Read the whole story