

Overtime pay proposal triggers wage debate

By Marilyn Geewax, KQED-TV

On Thursday, President Obama rolled out his plan for strengthening overtime pay protections for millions of workers. In his view, if more workers got fatter paychecks, they could spend more and stimulate the economy.

But if his critics are right, then employers would end up laying off workers to make up for the higher wage costs. And that would hurt the already painfully slow recovery.

Which scenario is right?

Economists are divided. Some say the proposed changes would give the economy just what it needs: more consumer demand. Others say it would lead to exactly what the economy doesn't need: fewer jobs.

Read the whole story

Early spring means allergy season for Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Eyes swollen? Nose running?

It's allergy season in Tahoe and technically it's not even spring.

Mother Nature apparently has her own calendar. Trees are flowering in the Lake Tahoe Basin, bulbs are sprouting and some early bloomers are shining through.



Spring is in air in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN

According to the Weather Channel, the pollen forecast for today on the South Shore is “high” and will be “very high” on Wednesday and Thursday. The active trees are juniper, sycamore and willow.

“An earlier spring means there is more pollen earlier in the season and for perhaps a longer duration, too. It does not mean the allergy season will shorten – we are more likely to experience the opposite,” Ron Roth, otolaryngologist with Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Seasons in Tahoe vary and there is no ‘normal’ here for allergy season.”

With the temperatures forecast to be in the 50s all week, the outdoors is calling. But that’s the worst place to be for some allergy sufferers. But if dust is your problem, then calling in sick because you need to be outdoors could be the solution.

“To combat allergies, avoid contact with allergens to which you have sensitivities. That may involve limiting exposure to pets, dust, or time outdoors,” Roth said. He said the most common allergies this time of year are pet dander, dust, pollen and insects.

Symptoms of allergies include runny or itchy nose, itchy and watery eyes, and sometimes a scratchy throat.

“The allergy skin test is the quickest, most inexpensive, and most accurate way to find out what you are allergic to, whether it’s mold, grass pollen, or a type of weed,” says Neil Kao, an internal medicine physician specializing in allergy and immunology at the Allergic Disease and Asthma Center in Greenville, S.C., told WebMD.

Over the counter medications should help most people.

“Avoid chronic use of nose sprays such as nasal sprays that are supposed to last for 12 hour periods. Frequent use over time can lead to inflammation and cause the congestion and nasal obstruction you are trying to resolve,” Roth warned.

Manslaughter charges filed in Truckee deaths

By AP

Nevada County prosecutors have filed manslaughter charges against a Truckee-based contractor whose negligence they say produced the carbon monoxide that killed two men at a home north of Lake Tahoe last fall.

Assistant District Attorney Anna Ferguson said 41-year-old Kurt Schoemig was charged Monday with two counts of involuntary manslaughter.

She said in a statement he “played a substantial factor” in causing the deaths of 69-year-old Albert Senzatimore of San Jose and 57-year-old Gary Trovinger of Los Gatos at

Trovinger's home in Tahoe Donner in October.

Ferguson said Schoemig, president of Cedar Ridge Builders, didn't have the necessary permit for work done last year.

Police say an employee cut a furnace exhaust pipe, but the project wasn't completed, leaving the pipe to vent into the home when the heater started.

Recovery slow to come to all Nevadans

By Conor Shine, Las Vegas Sun

Ever look around at the signs of recovery here – the construction and rebound in travel and tourism – and wonder why it doesn't feel like the recession has ended for you?

There's a reason: It hasn't in terms of wages in Nevada.

But the slow increase in most people's pay has meant that thin family budgets are stretched even further, constricting consumer spending, a crucial cog in the region's overall economic recovery. With unemployment still at almost 9 percent in December, a return to normal wage growth likely will take several years, economists say.

With high unemployment and an excess of willing workers, there's little pressure for companies to increase salaries. That likely won't change until the unemployment rate drops to 5 or 6 percent.

As tourism stalled and consumer spending dipped, employees in service-related jobs also took a hit. Wages of hairdressers,

fitness trainers, car technicians and others dropped as the public scrimped and saved by forgoing nonessentials.

Read the whole story

4 accused of buying alcohol for minors in S. Tahoe

Four people, including two South Lake Tahoe residents, were arrested this weekend in an operation targeting people buying alcohol for minors.

Dubbed Shoulder Tap Decoy Operation, the March 15 event had more than 100 law enforcement agencies in the state involved.

Arrested in South Lake Tahoe were: Stevie Smith, 23, from Pasadena; Harvey Hampton, 58, from South Lake Tahoe; Charles Kerr, 72, from South Lake Tahoe; and Hamza Salmi, 32, from San Francisco.

In total, the operation resulted in 522 arrests. Most people were cited for furnishing alcoholic beverages to minors, and others have been arrested for crimes such as drunken driving, illegal drugs, false identification, open containers in public, public drunkenness, parole violations and outstanding warrants.

The program uses a minor under the direct supervision of a peace officer to stand outside a liquor or convenience store and ask patrons to buy them alcohol. The minor indicates in some way he or she is underage and cannot purchase the alcohol. If the adults agree to purchase alcohol for the minor, officers then arrest and cite the person for furnishing

alcohol to the minor.

The penalty for furnishing alcohol to a minor is a minimum \$1,000 fine and 24 hours of community service.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Project designed to improve flow at Tallac Site

By Kathryn Reed

Improving the circulation of traffic and pedestrians are major goals of a proposed project at the Tallac Historic Site on the South Shore.

The U.S. Forest Service wants to get rid of the access point at Heritage Way that is across from Fallen Leaf Lake Road and the one at the Valhalla gate. A new entrance point would be created near the Camp Richardson corral.

Within the recreation area a loop road would be constructed to connect to Taylor Creek Visitors Center.



The U.S. Forest Service wants to improve circulation

at the Tallac Historic Site.

Photo/LTN file

Improvements would also be made to the trail system. Routes would be created to accommodate walkers and cyclists. They would interconnect so people would not have to return to the main trail along the highway. This does not mean cyclists will necessarily be able ride through the historic site. Currently, bikes must be walked.

These would be Class 1 trails that are 10-feet wide.

“The big picture is we are looking after resource protection by providing for better, more sustainable visitor recreation patterns,” Daniel Cressy, landscape architect with the USFS, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Two action alternatives are included in the environmental assessment that is out for public comment. The second alternative does not include the loop inside connecting the recreation sites.

Included in the proposal are additional parking spaces. The idea is to get vehicles off Highway 89 where they are parked on the dirt. When Caltrans comes through with its water quality project those spaces will be eliminated.

Part of the U.S. Forest Service project is also to improve water quality. Components include infiltration basins, drip line trenches for structures, slope stabilization along the shoreline, and construction of a fence between the Kiva Point beach area and the Taylor Creek Marsh.

Another improvement at Kiva will be restrooms. At times there have been portable toilets at the beach. Cressy said human waste can be an issue out there.

Informational signs are planned for Kiva Point, along with a path from the parking lot to the beach to comply with

Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Some user created trails will be decommissioned.

Cressy said a price tag for the project has not been calculated. Funding for the project would be sought once an alternative is chosen and approved.

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Notes:

- Comments will be accepted until April 6.
- The environmental analysis is online.
- For more info, contact Ashley Sommer at 530.543.2615 or asommer@fs.fed.us.

Civil rights commission looks at Nev. busing of patients

By Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

James Flavy Coy Brown, a homeless and mentally ill man allegedly “dumped” by Nevada’s primary psychiatric hospital via Greyhound bus into Sacramento last year, on Friday became the national face of a problem that experts said is widespread and should be curtailed by federal authorities.

Brown’s story touched off a Sacramento Bee investigation into the Las Vegas hospital’s practice of routinely busing mentally ill patients to cities across the country. The saga was the centerpiece of a lengthy hearing before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C., that explored the need for

reforms of a federal law designed to protect patients from being discharged without proper treatment and planning.

“James Brown and others like him can no longer endure a disintegrating system of emergency mental health care,” said Staci Pratt, who spoke on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada.

Read the whole story

Feds approve medical marijuana research

By Evan Halper and Cindy Carcamo, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration handed backers of medical marijuana a significant victory Friday, opening the way for a University of Arizona researcher to examine whether pot can help veterans cope with post-traumatic stress, a move that could lead to broader studies into potential benefits of the drug.

For years, scientists who have wanted to study how marijuana might be used to treat illness say they have been stymied by resistance from federal drug officials.

The Arizona study had long ago been sanctioned by the Food and Drug Administration, but under federal rules, such experiments can use marijuana only from a single, government-run farm in Mississippi. Researchers say the agency that oversees the farm, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, has long been hostile to proposals aimed at examining possible benefits of the drug.

Read the whole story

College grads take low-wage jobs, displace less educated

By Katherine Peralta, Bloomberg

Jeanina Jenkins, a 20-year-old high-school graduate from St. Louis, is stuck in a \$7.82-an-hour part-time job at McDonald's Corp. that she calls a "last resort" because nobody would offer her anything better.

Stephen O'Malley, 26, a West Virginia University graduate, wants to put his history degree to use teaching high school. What he's found instead is a bartender's job in his home town of Manasquan, New Jersey.

Jenkins and O'Malley are at opposite ends of a dynamic that is pushing those with college degrees down into competition with high-school graduates for low-wage jobs that don't require college. As this competition has intensified during and after the recession, it's meant relatively higher unemployment, declining labor market participation and lower wages for those with less education.

The jobless rate of Americans ages 25 to 34 who have only completed high school grew 4.3 percentage points to 10.6 percent in 2013 from 2007, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Unemployment for those in that age group with a college degree rose 1.5 percentage points to 3.7 percent in the same period.

Read the whole story

Nevada county settles suits on I-80 cash seizures

By Scott Sonner, AP

A rural Nevada county has settled lawsuits with two men who said a sheriff's deputy violated their civil rights when they were stopped for speeding on Interstate 80, searched for drugs and forced to forfeit tens of thousands of dollars even though no drugs were found and no charges filed in either case.

The Humboldt County District Attorney's Office also confirmed in a statement late Friday that it has launched an internal review of the county's "forfeiture program" but that there is no indication there have been any illegal stops or any wrongdoing on the party of Sheriff Ed Kilgore or his deputies.

Tan Nguyen of Newport and Michael Lee of Denver said in lawsuits filed in U.S. District Court in Reno they were stopped last year on Interstate 80 near Winnemucca about 165 miles east of Reno under the pretext of speeding. They said they were subjected to illegal searches and told they wouldn't be released with their vehicles unless they forfeited their cash.

The suits accused the same veteran deputy, Lee Dove, of taking a briefcase full of \$50,000 in cash from Nguyen after stopping him for exceeding the speed limit by 3 mph in September, and seizing \$13,800 and a handgun from Lee during a similar stop in December.

"The case has been settled," Steve Balkenbush, a Reno attorney representing Humboldt County in the case, told the Associated Press on Friday.

The district attorney's office said the settlement involved Nyguen and Lee but did not disclose how much money was involved. Nguyen's lawyer told a Reno television station Friday he received a check for the full \$50,000 seized as well as \$10,000 in attorney fees.

"He wasn't charged with anything. He had no drugs in his car. The pretext for stopping him was he was doing 78 in a 75," John Ohlson told KRNV-TV.

"It's like Jesse James or Black Bart," he told AP in an interview last week.

Lee's Reno lawyer, Jeff Dickerson, did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

The district attorney's statement said both men were stopped legally and that "every asset that was seized pursuant to those stops was lawfully seized." But it acknowledged the resolution of their claims didn't receive priority in the district attorney's office because of staff shortages.

"The cases involved Mr. Nguyen and Mr. Lee raised procedural issues in the District Attorney's Office and those issues are being addressed by a review of every submitted case," the statement said.

It said media reports about the lawsuits had "unfairly criticized" the sheriff's office, which "was acting in accordance with the law as they understood it and was not responsible for any procedural defects following their seizure of the assets."

"One thing is certain, even prior to the completion of the review by the District Attorney's Office, is that the seized assets were not utilized unlawfully," the DA's office said. "Following completion of this review, a full accounting of those assets will be available for review."

The lawsuits claimed the cash seizures were part of a pattern of stopping drivers for speeding as a pretext for drug busts in violation of the Constitution.

Nguyen was given a written warning for speeding but wasn't cited. As a condition of release, he signed a "property for safekeeping receipt," which indicated the money was abandoned or seized and not returnable. But the lawsuit says he did so only because Dove threatened to seize his vehicle unless he "got in his car and drove off and forgot this ever happened."

The day after Nguyen had his money taken, the sheriff issued a news release with a photograph of Dove pictured with a K-9 and \$50,000 in seized cash "after a traffic stop for speeding."

"This cash would have been used to purchase illegal drugs and now will benefit Humboldt County with training and equipment. Great job," the statement said.