

NYT reporter: Journalists need to 'surrender or fight'

By Savannah Luschei, Daily Californian

James Risen, the *New York Times* reporter facing imprisonment for refusing to disclose his sources, denounced the federal government's infringement on the press in a rare public appearance Thursday, saying it is time for journalists to "surrender or fight."

Risen spoke to a crowd of about 300 lawyers, journalists and others at Berdahl Auditorium in Stanley Hall on Thursday evening in a talk hosted by the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism titled "Prosecuting the Press." He spoke alongside Lowell Bergman, director of the graduate school's Investigative Reporting Program.

The lack of protection for national security reporters, he said, has allowed the federal government to demand that journalists like him reveal their sources, which threatens the integrity of the press.

"The basic issue is, can we continue as journalists to protect and offer the confidentiality to someone who knows something going on in the government but doesn't want to go public?" he asked the audience, which included high-profile guests such as Daniel Ellsberg, the whistle-blower responsible for leaking the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* in 1971.

Read the whole story

Small businesses grapple with health care law

By Andrew Doughman, Las Vegas Sun

Americans now know that President Obama erred when he told the nation that people can keep their health plans if they like them.

In Nevada, about 25,000 people in the individual health insurance market received cancellation notices, leading to an apology from the president and a proposed fix.

But this isn't over.

The same principle that led to people receiving cancellation notices also applies to businesses. Workers will face a lot of changes to the health care market in late 2014 as business owners seek to comply with business-related provisions of the health care law that start Jan. 1, 2015.

The timing means workers and business owners will face disruptions in the health insurance market right as Republicans and Democrats are competing to win votes in the Nov. 4, 2014, election.

"It'll be what you're hearing now about the individual (health insurance) plans times 10," said one health insurance broker with large-business clients in Las Vegas.

That's because the individual insurance market is small. Many more people get insurance through small-group or large employer health plans.

Many of these plans already provide better coverage than individual health plans, but they'll still have to comply with the law come 2015.

Read the whole story

Brown on the fence about fourth term

By Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO — He has millions of dollars in his campaign account, solid approval ratings and a small number of potential challengers who are virtually unknown, but Gov. Jerry Brown still won't say whether he'll run for re-election next year.

As recently as Tuesday, the governor deflected the question at a public event. "I am aware that in November of next year there will be an election," he said, "and I will make some decisions regarding that."

Two days later, he joined deep-pocketed Hollywood luminaries in a campaign fundraiser at the Bel-Air home of Disney studio chief Alan Horn.

Although Brown stays mostly out of the spotlight, his aggressive fundraising — and his preference for biding his time — put the safe money on a run for an unprecedented fourth term as governor, a race he would enter as a strong front-runner. And experts say that despite an already respectable war chest, it behooves him to wait.

Read the whole story

TCPUD water, sewer rates to increase

Sewer and water rates are going up for Tahoe City Public Utility District customers.

When the board approved the 2014 budget this month the increases were part of the \$8.7 million operating budget. Sewer rates will increase by \$1.73 per month. Water rates will increase \$3.27 per month on average for customers using 112,000 gallons of water per year.

TCPUD is planning \$9.1 million in capital improvements. About \$3.5 million of that will come from grants.

The budget does not include general raises for employees.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Water agency concerned if Tahoe wilderness area expands

By Rocklin and Roseville Today

AUBURN – A campaign proposing to expand the Granite Chief Wilderness Area by more than 10,000 acres west of Lake Tahoe has raised concerns at the Placer County Water Agency.

In a report to the PCWA Board of Directors on Nov. 21,

Director of Resource Development Andy Fecko and natural resources consultant Marie Davis said the area proposed for expansion includes the watershed above Hell Hole and French Meadows reservoirs, which are major features of the agency's Middle Fork project.

The project supplies water to significant portions of Placer County and produces enough hydroelectric energy to power a community of over 100,000 homes.

A wilderness designation is the most restrictive land management strategy available on federal lands. No vehicle, helicopter or other motorized access, forestry and fuel load management operations, or land improvements are permitted, and fire management activities are severely limited in such areas.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe hotel cutting it close to open on time



The Landing Resort in South Lake Tahoe is expected to open Dec. 12. Photos/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

The sound of construction equipment continues to hum from Landing Resort & Spa despite its anticipated opening in two weeks.

Billed as Lake Tahoe's first five-star resort, the property was once a throwback to "old Tahoe" and now has the makings of a modern, upscale hotel.

It's expected to open Dec. 12, with introductory room rates of \$149 per night for one of the 88 rooms. Rooms come with fireplaces and decks.

While the hotel claims to have private beach access, in reality anyone can pay to go to Lakeside Beach.

Bikes will be free to use. In the winter ski valet and boot warmers are available.

The 3,600-square-foot rooftop deck is designed for parties, weddings and other events.

A pool, hot tub and five outdoor fire pits are on the grounds.

Included on the property, which used to be the Royal Valhalla in South Lake Tahoe near Stateline, is a restaurant called Jimmy's. It's based on owner Jim Demetriades' Mammoth restaurant. Jimmy's will serve Greek-seafood. Based on the menu out front it will not be a place vegetarians will visit.

British chef Maria Elia will be running the kitchen. She is well versed in Greek cuisine. In September her third cookbook was published. It's a collection of recipes inspired by her Greek heritage. The restaurant includes private dining alcoves with fireplaces and outdoor fire pits with views of the lake from the patio. The wine list includes 250 labels from around the world.

A mix of about 70 full-time and part-time employees is

expected to work at the resort during peak times.



Contractors are still working on the Landing Resort.

However, getting to this point has not been completely smooth.

There is a question as to whether trees were poisoned or more taken out than needed, they've angered neighbors, the hotel is already on its second marketing and sales director, and it has dropped a local spa operator in preference of running it in-house.

Controversy has arisen with a neighbor and the fence that now divides the two properties. Plus, the fence was initially put in without a permit.

"Once we were aware that the fence was being constructed, our staff contacted the project manager to notify them of the fence permit requirement. They then submitted an application and a permit was issued. This is not the ideal sequence when it comes to permitting construction work, but we often are notified of, or see work being done without proper permits and once we contact the property owner they follow up with the required permit application," Hillary Roverud, chief planner with South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Jim Promo, general manager of the resort, told *Lake Tahoe News* the fence issue has been resolved with neighbor Jake Parnell. It's short in front and at least 6-feet-high in Parnell's back

yard. Parnell used to be able to see to the lake from his back yard. Now he can't. Parnell, who lives part time in South Tahoe and part time off the hill, had yet to see the fence as of last week so he didn't have a comment.

Some of the trees that were removed conveniently opened up better views of the lake, especially from where weddings will take place. Promo said weddings are going to be a large component of their business.

"We had an arboriculturist come out. They made recommendations. The trees we took were basically diseased," Promo said.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency forester tagged four lodgepole and one Jeffery to be felled.

According to TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen, one of the trees that came down was because trenching work for a utility line was done on the wrong side of the tree and when it was done on the correct side the tree was then severely compromised.

He said one of the trees was in the city's right-of-way. It was taken out because it would eventually have to go when the city put in a curb.

More info about the Landing Resort & Spa may be found online.

Government: Public has no

right to challenge phone record spying

By Matt Sledge, Huffington Post

NEW YORK — After years of secrecy, the National Security Agency's phone records surveillance program had its day in open court on Friday, as civil liberties lawyers asked a federal judge in New York to shut it down, and government lawyers claimed ordinary Americans cannot legally challenge it.

U.S. District Court Judge William H. Pauley III did not immediately rule on issuing an injunction against the NSA program. But he did push the government on whether it respected Americans' rights to privacy and freedom of association, and whether Congress was adequately informed about the program.

"Never before has the government attempted a program of dragnet surveillance on this scale," warned Alexander Abdo, a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union. The group brought its lawsuit against the program in June, just days after NSA leaker Edward Snowden revealed its existence. The ACLU is arguing that the government's surveillance exceeds both its powers under the Patriot Act, and under the First and Fourth amendments.

Department of Justice attorney Stuart Delery said ordinary Americans have no standing to challenge the collection of their call records. Citing a 1979 Supreme Court ruling, he said Americans have no reasonable expectation of privacy for those records, and that only phone companies can challenge their collection.

Read the whole story

Phone bills for S. Tahoe residents may go up

Anyone in South Lake Tahoe who gets a phone bill – for a land line or cell – is likely to see a slight increase on Jan. 1.

The City Council on Dec. 10 will have a public hearing to discuss raising the emergency communication system access fee. The current fee is \$1.61 month. The proposal is to have it be \$2.25 on Jan. 1, 2014, and then \$2.65 on Jan. 1, 2015.

This is the fee associated with calling 911.

City Manager Nancy Kerry did not respond to questions about the increase.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. projects years of budget surpluses

By David Siders and Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

In its most optimistic budget forecast in more than a decade, the Legislature's fiscal analyst said Wednesday that California is poised for years of multibillion-dollar surpluses.

However, even a moderate economic downturn could throw the

state back into deficit, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office said. The analyst projected a \$5.6 billion surplus by June 2015 and urged lawmakers to hold much of it in reserve.

The fiscal outlook is a prelude to annual budget negotiations at the Capitol, where the expectation of a surplus will foist pressure on Democratic lawmakers to increase spending in budget talks next year. Many social service advocates limped out of the recession desperate to restore or expand programs for California's poorest and neediest residents, and despite modest spending increases many of their funding requests remain unfulfilled.

"There were many things cut that need to be restored," said Anthony Wright, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Health Access California. "We had cut the safety net beyond the pale. ... We started to restore this past year, but only at the margins, and more needs to be done."

Read the whole story

Candidate wants to trade law practice for bench

By Kathryn Reed

Being able to balance business and the law is what David Combellack believes will set him apart from the other candidates running for El Dorado County Superior Court judge.

The 64-year-old is vying for the seat of retiring Judge Doug Phimister.

The El Dorado County native has run his own law firm for the

past 30 years. He has been in private practice for 37 years. The cases he has taken on have run the gamut from criminal to domestic relations to juvenile cases to a broad spectrum of civil cases, as well as probate.



David Combellack

"I understand the importance of making things practical and making things profitable, not that the court will be profitable, but running the court in an efficient manner I think is important to the public," Combellack told *Lake Tahoe News*.

El Dorado's courts are known for being backlogged and many have pointed to how judges are running their courtrooms for the inefficiencies and delays in cases being heard.

Combellack has been toying with the idea of being a judge for more than a decade. He said until now the timing had not been right.

He has some experience of what it would like to be on the bench.

"I've been involved as a volunteer as a judge pro tem in family court, traffic court, and civil court. (You are) attempting to resolve cases that were on the road to trial through an alternative dispute resolution process," he explained.

His involvement with Teen Court is one of the things

Combella is most proud of.

Combella looks forward to going from being advocate for a client to being unbiased.

"I am prepared to listen and I am prepared to make decisions," he said.

Combella has also been president of the El Dorado Bar Association, on the Community Foundation board, and Marshall Hospital board as well as involved with other volunteer organizations.