

Insurance exchanges may limit health care options

By Chad Terhune, Los Angeles Times

The doctor can't see you now.

Consumers may hear that a lot more often after getting health insurance under President Obama's Affordable Care Act.

To hold down premiums, major insurers in California have sharply limited the number of doctors and hospitals available to patients in the state's new health insurance market opening Oct. 1.

New data reveal the extent of those cuts in California, a crucial test bed for the federal healthcare law.

These diminished medical networks are fueling growing concerns that many patients will still struggle to get care despite the nation's biggest healthcare expansion in half a century.

Consumers could see long wait times, a scarcity of specialists and loss of a longtime doctor.

Read the whole story

Settlements being reached in MV-STATA bus case

By Kathryn Reed

Whether MV Transportation ever gets the \$2 million it believes

it is owed by a slew of South Shore entities may never be known because details of settlement agreements are only trickling out.

Lake Tahoe News has been told the casinos and lodging property involved in the legal dispute have settled. TRPA has confirmed it has settled.

"I am not at liberty to discuss this with you," Dan Garrison, senior vice president-general manager of Ridge Tahoe, said when asked if it's true the Ridge has settled. He would neither confirm nor deny a settlement was reached.

"Heavenly does not comment on open litigation," Heavenly Mountain Resort spokeswoman Sally Gunter told *LTN*.

Neither Mike Bradford nor Stacy Noyes with Lakeside Inn responded to questions. Noyes had been on the transportation board that was sued. At one time all the board members were named as defendants, but they were eventually dropped from the case.

The defendants are:

- STATA
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
- Douglas County
- South Lake Tahoe
- Heavenly Mountain Resort
- Tropicana Entertainment
- Harrah's Operating Company
- Harvey's Tahoe Management Company
- Lakeside Inn

- Horizon Casino
- Lake Tahoe Casino Realty
- Columbia Properties Tahoe
- Ridge Tahoe Property Owners Association
- Tahoe Transportation District.

The quagmire has been going on for three years.

Fairfield-based MV had signed a three-year contract in summer 2009 to run the day-to-day operation of the bus service on the South Shore that included BlueGo, Heavenly ski shuttles, Nifty 50 Trolley, routes to Carson City, and service into Carson Valley.

MV filed a lawsuit against South Tahoe Area Transit Authority – which was the overseer of the bus operations – after the agency severed the contract within a year. STATA filed for bankruptcy on Sept. 13, 2010. MV that year filed a complaint saying it was owed \$2 million for services rendered and another \$1 million in lost revenue.

(Tahoe Transportation District has since taken over the operation of the bus service.)

In January this year U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Gregg Zive sent the case to mediation. Mark Shinderman with Milbank Tweed, Hadley & MCloy LLP in Los Angeles was selected to be the mediator.

The last settlement hearing was Sept. 3.

More news could be forthcoming this week. The South Lake Tahoe City Council will discuss the matter in closed session on Sept. 17. To date the city has spent more than \$100,000 on outside legal counsel to defend the case. City Attorney Tom Watson says his policy is to not talk to the media about

anything.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The city hopes to find a resolution, but if we are unable to find a resolution, we are willing to litigate."

Most of the government agencies' transportation dollars are from the state or federal governments. That money is called a pass-through as it is given to an agency like STATA or TTD. Government entities contend they paid the money they were supposed to pay and should not have to pay more.

That was not El Dorado County's philosophy at the time. At the get-go the county settled for \$160,000.

It has not been disclosed how much MV would like from each entity.

The TTD board is having a special meeting Sept. 18 at 1pm to only discuss the settlement with MV. One of the agenda items it take possible action.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board has agreed to settle its two issues that amount to writing a check for \$16,000. Scott Lichtig, attorney for TRPA, said the bi-state agency was once a creditor and it was agreed that it would receive \$34,000, while at the same time having to settle the other portion of the case for \$50,000.

TRPA was a non-voting member on the STATA board. It also leased space to STATA like it does now to TTD.

Attorney David Thompson, the federal bankruptcy trustee appointed by Zive, was not available for comment, nor was the MV attorney.

Sources have told *Lake Tahoe News* more settlements are likely this month, while some defendants will choose to have their day in court.

Climate change warning issued at Tahoe conference

By AP

Author Bill McKibben has opened a Sierra Nevada conservation conference with a call for a “coordinated, global” effort to deal with climate change.

McKibben, in a keynote address at the Sierra Nevada Alliance’s annual conference in South Lake Tahoe, said change being made on the local level to deal with climate change will do little good unless it’s accompanied by change on a global level.

“Scientists are quite clear that we will raise the temperature 4 to 5 degrees in the course of this century on our current trajectory,” he said. “If that happens, then we can’t have civilization in the places and ways we’ve had them.”



Bill McKibben

The three-day conference, which began with McKibben’s speech Friday, also features a session on the impact of climate change on Western wildfires as well as workshops and field trips.

The alliance consists of over 85 member conservation groups that work to protect the Sierra.

"This year marks the Sierra Nevada Alliance's 20th anniversary, and we are celebrating all our great work protecting and restoring the Sierra at this year's conference," said Joan Clayburgh, executive director of the alliance.

McKibben is founder of 350.org, an international movement aimed at solving the climate crisis with representatives in some 190 countries. He also is author of "The End of Nature" and other books and articles on climate change.

The activist said his group plans to stage 145 events in 25 states across the country on Sept. 21 to "draw the line" against the Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would carry oil derived from tar sands in western Canada to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Opponents are demanding that President Obama reject the pipeline, saying it would carry "dirty oil" that contributes to global warming.

Many business and labor groups support the 1,700-mile pipeline as a source of jobs and a step toward North American energy independence.

"At this point, 70 to 75 percent of Americans understand that global warming is very real, and the need to do something about it," McKibben said. "The trick at this point is not to convert the other 25 percent. The fight is to get those who do know what's going on as active and engaged as possible."

Enrollment increasing at Calif. community colleges

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

California community colleges are starting the fall term on an upbeat note, with most boosting enrollment and the number of classes offered, according to a survey of the state's two-year schools released Wednesday.

About 90 percent of the campuses reported higher enrollment than last fall and 84 percent are increasing course sections.

Of the state's 112 community colleges, 95 responded to the survey from the chancellor's office. Overall, enrollment is expected to increase by 2.5 percent and course sections by 5 percent.

The colleges represented a broad cross-section of the state, including Sierra College in Rocklin, which is increasing enrollment by about 5% and course sections by nearly 8 percent. About 254 course sections are being restored, opening 6,500 seats for students, said Sierra President William H.Duncan.

[Read the whole story](#)

Feds not leaving medical marijuana alone

By Liz Halloran, NPR

When the Obama administration recently announced it wouldn't challenge the decision by Colorado and Washington voters to fully legalize marijuana, criticism rained down.

The administration's position, complained one Colorado congressman, was tantamount to allowing states to opt out of the federal law banning pot possession, cultivation and sale.

Other anti-legalization activists predicted that the administration was waving the white flag in the war on drugs.

The first claim is essentially true: The states will be creating their own regulatory regimes.

As for the idea of a surrender in the war on drugs, the reality is a little more complicated.

Read the whole story

Meyers on road to revitalize community

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Make it look pretty and be functional were the overwhelming sentiments of people who want to make Meyers be more than it is today.

Since the last meeting in February about the future of this South Shore enclave the advisory board has come up with a draft area plan for Meyers. Comments about the document were sought Sept. 11. The deadline to comment is Oct. 11.

The five main areas are: land use, environmental conservation,

implementation, transportation and recreation. Twenty-five projects have been indentified. On Wednesday people were asked to pick their top three.



Jennifer Quashnick writes a comment Sept. 11 about the Meyers Area Plan while talking to Lyn Barnett. Photo/Kathryn Reed

One item that keeps coming up is having some sort of sign to let people know they are entering Meyers. It could be placed at the bottom of Echo Summit headed west or possibly at the corner of highways 50 and 89 to capture more people.

Making the sign interactive would also embrace Meyers' theme of being the gateway to all things recreation. A swing could part of it and definitely the ability to climb on it.

Others suggested the sign be made out of old skis or have something to do with Snowshoe Thompson.

When it comes to deciding what to do with the area, many want to remove the bug station and make the rights-of-way along the highway narrower so the area looks more inviting for people to stop instead of speed through.

Caltrans is supposed to put in two sidewalks on Highway 50 next summer – one by Pioneer Trail and the other near the bug station. This will be the first step in linking both sides of

the highway in a safer manner.

Cluster parking that would tie into the trails is another idea.

Putting in bike paths that connect to Washoe Meadow State Park and Tahoe Paradise Park as well as the commercial core have been repeatedly mentioned.

Doing more with the community park was talked about. Making it more inviting, less dumpy and turning it into an area to have community events are suggestions.

Letting people know about the trails – where they are and where they go – was encouraged.

Tapping into the history of the area was broached, especially with the Celio ranch having just celebrated its 150 anniversary.

Putting in low level bollard lights to make the area more friendly in the dark, adding landscaping, and possibly putting in stampede concrete in the center of the highway are other ideas.

Once all of the comments are submitted and environmental review is done the final plan will come out. The goal is for the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board to take action on the Meyers Area Plan in the first quarter of 2014.

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Notes:

- The draft Meyers Area Plan is online.
- Comments may be submitted online via the above website or to Adam Lewandowski at alewandowski@trpa.org or P.O. Box 5310, Stateline, NV 89449.

- The deadline to submit comments is Oct. 11.
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CDC: Vaccination rates high, but measles outbreak a concern

By Eryn Brown, Los Angeles Times

Overall, young children in the U.S. maintained high vaccination rates in 2012, officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday.

But researchers also said there were 159 reported cases of measles between Jan. 1 and Aug. 24 this year – a higher number than usual – and gaps in immunization appear to be to blame.

The new data were published in two reports included in the latest edition of the health agency's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

In the first of the two papers, CDC researchers analyzed responses from the National Immunization Survey, which monitors vaccine coverage among children 19 to 35 months of age. The federal government targets 90% childhood vaccination rates. Nationwide, Americans are hitting or exceeding that goal for measles, mumps and rubella; for polio; for hepatitis B; and for varicella (the virus that causes chicken pox). Americans missed targets for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, and for Hib and PCV vaccines.

Read the whole story

Second homeowners seek all inclusive planned resorts

By Lauren Schuker Blum and Candace Jackson, Wall Street Journal

What attracts this generation of wealthy second-home buyers: ziplines, kids clubs and grilled cheese.

For decades focused on golf, skiing or hunting, today's master-planned resorts are being reimagined as fancy family camps, a trend that's helping revive a number of struggling high-end second-home communities. Developers say they're aiming to please everyone from toddlers to great-grandparents by merging luxurious trappings with amenities like bowling alleys, soda shops and video arcades. It's all designed to woo wealthy buyers on the hunt for a perfect family vacation.



Martis Camp has evolved into more than a golf course with big homes. Photo/Provided

"These days, you can't just offer a Jack Nicklaus golf course and instantly be successful," says Chris Fair, president of Resonance Consultancy, which advises developers of destination

homes and resort communities.

The shift comes after several difficult years in some second-home markets. Residential resorts made up some of the hardest hit real estate during the downturn: Some residential golf communities sold lots for \$1.

At Martis Camp – a 2,177-acre resort in Truckee that developer DMB/Highlands Group started in 2006 – amenities aimed at families have helped to ramp up sales in recent years, says Brian Hull, the club's director of sales. There is a family barn that features a bowling alley, a 44-seat movie theater, a swimming area, soda fountain, indoor basketball courts and an outdoor amphitheater. A soccer field, a softball diamond and a barbecue area are nearby. And for the artistically inclined, there's a "folk school" with classes in photography and pottery.

Last year, the club sold 117 properties for \$115 million, a step up from the 73 properties it sold in 2010 for \$72 million. So far this year, the developer has sold 103 properties for \$128 million.

Read the whole story

Incline man convicted in gas station robbery

Jorge Miranda-Rivas of Incline Village was found guilty in Washoe County District Court on Sept. 11 on one count each of robbery with a deadly weapon, discharging a weapon from within a structure, assault with a deadly weapon and grand larceny of an automobile .

The robbery at the Chevron in Incline occurred Jan. 2.

Miranda-Rivas is scheduled to be sentenced on Nov. 7.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nevada toys with Internet gaming beyond state line

By Cy Ryan and Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

The road to Nevada offering online poker to residents of other states is long and tortuous and gaming regulators took a step in that journey Wednesday when the state Gaming Control Board conducted a workshop meeting on a proposal for companies to offer progressive jackpots across state lines.

The state's largest slot machine manufacturers – International Game Technology and Bally Technologies – petitioned the Nevada Gaming Commission to amend regulations to allow multijurisdictional progressive prizes.

Gaming Control Board Chairman A.G. Burnett concurred that adoption of the amendments to the regulation could be viewed as a first step toward developing online poker across state lines.

“You might say we’d be sticking our toe in the water,” Burnett said of the proposal.

[Read the whole story](#)