

Nevada delegation lacks experience with questions of war

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

WASHINGTON — Asking Congress whether the U.S. should strike Syria put President Obama in an unusual position among U.S. presidents, who have usually engaged in military conflicts first and asked lawmakers for their opinions later.

It's also put the Nevada delegation in an awkward position. Thanks to the presidential history of asking Congress' forgiveness instead of permission, few of Nevada's representatives have ever had to decide to authorize a military strike before.

"No one knows how to do it. No one wants to do this," said David Damore, UNLV political science professor. "But the president throwing this back to Congress is forcing them to answer the question: Hey, you want me to do all this stuff, now let's see what you have to say."

That Nevada's delegation would be green when it comes to this once-in-a-blue-moon issue is hardly surprising: Four of its six members haven't even logged three years in Washington yet.

Read the whole story

Nevada mosquitoes test positive for West Nile

Mosquitoes from Douglas County have tested positive for West Nile virus and one person in the county has come down with the disease.

The Associated Press said the Nevada Department of Agriculture on Friday reported 42 mosquitoes tested positive for the disease. The other affected counties are Carson City, Elko, Lyon, Churchill and Clark. Six human cases have been reported in Clark County.

Infected mosquitoes can transfer the virus to humans and animals. Mosquitoes become infected after feeding on infected birds.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Placer County man admits destroying post office boxes

A Placer County man pleaded guilty Sept. 5 to being a felon in possession of ammunition, possessing 17 unauthorized access devices, and destruction of U.S. Post Office letter boxes.

According to court documents, the United States Postal Inspection Service received several reports of letter box tampering and destruction in Colfax, Auburn, and Foresthill.

An investigation led to Richard Lee Gray, 56, of Foresthill. On April 2, a search warrant was executed at his residence

where officers found stolen mail in the house and in his car, and also found burglary tools and pry bars. They also found 21 rounds of 20-gauge Winchester ammunition, one round of 20 gauge Remington ammunition, and two rounds of 410-gauge Remington ammunition.

In May 2001, Gray had been convicted in Southern California of possession of stolen U.S. Mail.

Gray is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 21. He faces up to 10 years in prison for the felon in possession of ammunition charge, 15 years in prison for the access device fraud, and three years in prison for destruction of U.S. mail letter boxes.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. spending millions on health reform law outreach

By Andrew Doughman

Nevada's state government is preparing for a huge shopping spree this autumn.

All Nevadans must have health insurance in 2014 under President Obama's health care law, and the state is contracting with companies to provide "navigators" who will educate people about the law's requirements and enroll tens of thousands of uninsured Nevadans in insurance plans starting Oct. 1.

"It'll be a matter of a family or individual sitting down in front of us with a laptop and we'll go through the entire

application process,” said Ted DeCorte, CEO at Consumer Assistance and Resource Enterprise, a nonprofit established specifically to implement the Affordable Care Act and enroll Nevadans in health insurance plans.

DeCorte’s group is one of seven organizations to receive \$2,477,000 in grant money – funded by both the federal and state government – to do the outreach work. DeCorte’s organization was awarded \$200,000.

The state awarded the largest grant to the Ramirez Group, a polling and policy research firm typically aligned with the Democratic Party.

Their client, Know Your Care, received about \$1 million from the state this year to help enroll the estimated 600,000 uninsured Nevadans in qualified health insurance plans before the Jan. 1, 2014 deadline under which all Americans must have health insurance or face a tax penalty on their 2015 tax return.

Read the whole story

LTUSD, California ready to be rid of NCLB

By Kathryn Reed

It might not matter that Lake Tahoe Unified School District didn’t do well on the latest round of standardized tests.

On Sept. 4 the governor’s office, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, legislative leaders and the California Teachers Association agreed to amend Assembly Bill

484 so any school district could opt into the computer-based Common Core test this school year instead of just the 20 percent of the state's schools that were selected to be part of the trial.

"AB484 shows California's commitment to implementing Common Core standards and helping every student succeed," Evan Westrup, a spokesman for Gov. Jerry Brown, said in a statement.

While there is supposed to be one more year of testing under the federal mandated No Child Left Behind, California wants to end it one year earlier. This is because nationwide the move in education is to implement Common Core standards. People no longer see relevance to NCLB. That mandate called for all students to be at a proficient level by 2014. It has not happened. And most educators never believed it would in part because the numbers included special education and English learners, as well as it's unrealistic to believe everyone would ever be at a proficient level.

Only 14 percent of California schools made it to that level on the 2013 tests. Statewide, schools dropped two points on the Academic Performance Index to 789. The target is 800.

Lake Tahoe Unified followed the state's pattern by having all but one school lose ground compared to 2012. And even then that school did not make the 800 goal.

**Lake Tahoe Unified API
scoresSchool 2012
score 2013 score**

STHS	
762	753
STMS	
809	789
Bijou	
697	720
Magnet	
941	929
Sierra House	
835	804
Tahoe Valley	
814	786

Source: *LTUSD*

Part of the problem with the NCLB tests is that they didn't track a grade level. The results for this year's third-graders are compared to last year's. This doesn't allow for measuring a class' progress. Schools and districts were then penalized or rewarded for backward or forward movement that wasn't ever comparing apples to apples.

"It is unfortunate that officials in Washington continue to enforce a program they have acknowledged is deeply flawed and that paints schools with the same broad brush," Torlakson said in a statement of NCLB.

The U.S. Department of Education is going to have to approve California's desire to abandon NCLB because it's supposed to be in effect through the end of the school year.

Lake Tahoe Unified started Common Core this school year.

“Common Core is a national objective where industry and colleges were saying they are having kids not coming in with critical skills they need,” LTUSD Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The government came up with Common Core standards across the nation.”

What Tarwater likes about Common Core is that it teaches critical and strategic thinking, has students reach conclusions based on understanding the concept instead of rote memorization.

LTUSD is ahead of the curve compared to many districts because for years it has been incorporating technology into everyday school life. Students have computers in their classrooms and most have Netbooks to take home.

Part of Common Core is that tests would be online. The idea this could cut down on cheating (no taking pictures of test questions and texting friends) and it puts students in the digital age, which is where the professional world is.

The new test is called Measurement of Academic Performance and Progress. This year schools could voluntarily take the test. It will be mandatory for the 2014-15 school year. And for the first three years a paper and pencil version will be devised.

California budgeted \$1.25 billion this year to help school districts train teachers, acquire materials and upgrade their computer systems.

LTUSD is using the money at each school site for teacher training called Shared Decision-Making. Some of the money is also being used for instructional material for math that will be for 2014-15.

Restaurants rethinking automatic tip for large parties

By Julie Jargon, Wall Street Journal

An updated tax rule is causing restaurants to rethink the practice of adding automatic tips to the tabs of large parties.

Starting in January, the Internal Revenue Service will begin classifying those automatic gratuities as service charges—which it treats as regular wages, subject to payroll tax withholding—instead of tips, which restaurants leave up to the employees to report as income.

The change would mean more paperwork and added costs for the restaurants—and a potential financial hit for waiters and waitresses who live on their tips but don't always report them fully.

Darden Restaurants Inc., owner of Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse and Red Lobster, has long included automatic 18 percent tips on the bill for parties of eight or more at its more than 2,100 restaurants, but is experimenting with eliminating them because of the IRS ruling, said a spokesman.

The chain in July stopped automatic tips at 100 restaurants in four cities, where it is testing a new system in which the restaurants include three suggested tip amounts, calculating for the customer the total with a 15 percent, 18 percent or 20 percent tip on all bills, regardless of party size. Diners can opt to tip more or less than the suggested amounts, or to not

tip. Depending on how patrons react and how well the new software system works, Darden may switch to such suggested tips at all of its restaurants. A spokesman said the company will decide by year-end.

Read the whole story

Internet protection bill on Brown's desk

By Patrick McGreevy and Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO — Internet users would get more protection for their confidential information under a bill that lawmakers sent Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday.

The legislators also want Brown to extend carpool-lane access for owners of hybrid plug-in vehicles and to toughen state rules for storing guns.

The Internet bill is an effort to keep up with technology, lawmakers said. Existing law requires that consumers be notified when database operators find breaches that disclose Social Security, driver's license and credit card numbers or medical records.

But California does not require customer notification when passwords, user names or security questions and answers are breached.

Read the whole story

Thousands of Martis Valley acres to be preserved

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

Nearly 6,400 acres of land in the scenic Martis Valley between Truckee and Lake Tahoe would be preserved under an agreement announced Wednesday among conservation groups, landowners and developers.

The pine forests and sagebrush meadows to be protected flow down the slopes of Martis Peak, which borders the Tahoe basin and has striking views of Lake Tahoe and Donner Summit.



An agreement means less development and more open space in Martis Valley.
Photo/LTN

If Placer County officials approve the deal, the land, now owned by lumber giant Sierra Pacific Industries, would be the largest parcel yet preserved in an effort to protect the 70-square-mile Martis Valley from large-scale development.

“This is the biggest piece of the conservation puzzle in Martis Valley,” said Tom Mooers, executive director of Sierra

Watch. The conservation group helped negotiate the agreement and previously has been involved in similar deals in Martis Valley, including preservation of the 1,400-acre Waddle Ranch.

The efforts came about after Placer County approved the Martis Valley Community Plan in 2003. The plan would have allowed 6,000 homes along with commercial and recreational development on the county's 45-square-mile section of the valley, once home to cattle ranches.

Read the whole story

GOP thrives at local level in California

By Mark Z. Barabak, Los Angeles Times

OAKLEY — Randy Pope is a conservative-tinged libertarian with a strong aversion to big government and the nanny state he sees “growing, growing, growing.”

“I can’t choose which toilet I want to put in my house. I can’t choose which light bulb I want to illuminate my living room,” he says, ticking off the outrages on his meaty fingers. “I can’t choose which shower head I’m going to use when I’m bathing.”

Pope is a city councilman in this Democratic-leaning suburb on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and if that seems unusual given his rightward bent, he is not alone. Four of the five Oakley council members are registered Republicans, like Pope, elected the same day that voters overwhelmingly backed Democrats Jerry Brown and Barack Obama and approved

Proposition 30, the state tax hike initiative.

Over the last two decades, California has become a Democratic fortress, beyond the GOP's reach in presidential campaigns and all but hopeless in statewide contests. Republicans are largely irrelevant in Sacramento, where the most important fights are between liberal and more moderate Democrats.

Read the whole story

Red flag warning for Tahoe on Thursday

Updated 9:50am:

A red flag warning has been issued for the greater Lake Tahoe area, including western Nevada, until 11 tonight.

These warnings mean weather conditions are ripe for a fire occurring – high winds and low humidity. Winds are expected to be out of the southwest at 15 to 25 mph, with gusts up to 35 mph, 45 mph in wind prone areas and 65 mph on ridges.

Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake will have winds much sooner in the day than usual, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. By 8am gusts of 30 mph are possible on both lakes. A lake wind advisory is in effect for Lake Tahoe today from 8am-11pm. Waves could be 2-4 feet.

Smoke from the Rim Fire burning near Yosemite could continue to blow toward the basin.

The fire is now at 237,341 acres and is 80 percent contained.

Jerry Snyder with the U.S. Forest Service told the Associated Press that investigators have ruled out an illegal marijuana grow as being the cause.

AP on Thursday morning has stated the USFS is reporting the cause of the Rim Fire is a hunter's illegal campfire.

Officials say to date it has cost \$81 million to fight the Rim Fire. Full containment is expected Sept. 20.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*