Opinion: California should follow Nevada’s lead on crayfish

By Stuart Leavenworth, Sacramento Bee

They go by several different names: Crayfish, crawfish, crawdads, yabbies, mudbugs.

Whatever you call them, there are about 220 million of these crustaceans bathing in Lake Tahoe, where they apparently are adding to the algae growth that clouds North America’s largest alpine lake.

Some scientists want to reduce these numbers, and for that there is an easy solution. If California and Nevada were to transplant some Cajuns to Tahoe, the crayfish population would be diminished in a few months.

Instead, as Carlos Alcalá reported in The Bee, Nevada has just issued its first permit for commercial harvesting of crayfish in that state’s waters of Lake Tahoe. The company granted the permit, Tahoe Lobster Co., hopes to supply restaurants looking for a local source of what French gourmands call écrevisse.

So should California follow Nevada’s lead and permit commercial harvesting of Tahoe crayfish? I say: Laissez les bon temps rouler.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Political ads go on the attack in swing states

By Doyle McManus, Los Angeles Times

In this pivotal election year, fellow citizens, I give you a chilling vision of two Americas.

One America is the swing states, the dozen or so states that don’t fall into the Democratic or Republican camps and will ultimately decide the presidential election. Those unhappy states – they know who they are – are already being flooded with noisy political advertising, day and night.

The other America, the happier America, is what political strategists call “safe states.” In these lucky places, television viewers are mostly safe from being inundated with presidential political harangues.

Election day is almost four months away, but the bombardment has begun in key swing cities such as Columbus, Ohio, and Orlando, Fla., where television stations are already running short of advertising time to sell. One media consulting firm, Borrell Associates, forecasts that political advertising this year will approach $10 billion nationwide, a huge increase from the roughly $7 billion spent in 2008.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Debt the biggest

national security threat

By Kenneth Lieberthal and Michael O'Hanlon, Las Vegas Sun

Drones, kill lists, computer viruses and administration leaks are all the rage in the current political debate. They indeed merit serious scrutiny at a time when the rules of war, and technologies available for war, are changing fast. That said, these issues are not the foreign policy centerpiece of the 2012 presidential race.

Economic renewal and fiscal reform have become the pre-eminent issues, not only for domestic and economic policy but for foreign policy as well. As the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael G. Mullen was fond of saying, national debt has become perhaps our top national security threat. And neither major presidential candidate is doing enough about it. This issue needs to be framed as crucial not just for our future prosperity but for international stability as well.

The United States has been running trillion-dollar deficits, resulting in a huge explosion in the country's indebtedness. Publicly held debt now equals 70 percent of gross domestic product, a threshold many economists consider significant and highly worrisome. Making matters worse, half of our current deficit financing is being provided by foreigners. We are getting by with low interest rates and tolerable levels of domestic investment only because they find U.S. debt attractive, which may not last.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Olympic bid may take more time and patience

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 6, 2012, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

What does it take to host the Olympics?

Money is the first requirement, of course.

And the old real estate rule about "location, location, location" would certainly apply, too.

Near the top of the list, however, would be patience … a heckuva lot of patience.

That's the message of the U.S. Olympic Committee's decision this week to forgo a bid for either the summer games in 2020 or the winter games in 2022, concentrating instead on a bid for 2024 or 2026.

For officials in Reno-Tahoe who already had pushed back their plans to attract a return of the Winter Olympics to the region from 2018 to 2022, the decision was surely disappointing.

If the USOC and the Lake Tahoe Winter Games Exploratory Committee use that extra time to develop a winning bid, it will be worth the wait.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Trust in Nevada's burgeoning re-branding effort

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Bumper stickers with a prospective tourism tagline for the state were passed out at last week's meeting of the Nevada Tourism Commission.

They read, "Nevada: California's Man Cave."

Don't worry, it's a joke. No one is seriously considering that line.

The bumper stickers were sent to the state by author Jim Gilmore, who made a presentation at the Tourism Commission's "Rural Roundup" event in April at Lake Tahoe. He noted the state's efforts to brand itself – a difficult task, considering the diverse nature of Nevada.

As all of us who live here know, Nevada is many things to many people.

It is mountain vistas and desert landscapes. Glitzy entertainment extravaganzas and ghost towns. Pampering spa experiences and extreme sports adventures. Cruising casinos and road-tripping to wide-open spaces.

It's a monumental task for someone to develop a catchphrase that incorporates that personality without stepping on someone else's copyrights. But Seattle-based GreenRubino was contracted by the state to try.

Last month, the Tourism Commission's marketing committee met and talked about some of the finalists under consideration. Predictably, the public response was less than glowing.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Disclosure key to campaign finance reform

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Common Cause and other, similarly inclined reform groups have for decades advocated limits on campaign contributions as a cure for the corrupting influence of special interest money.

The Watergate scandal begat limits on presidential and congressional campaign contributions four decades ago and more recently, they found their way into California's politics.

However, every election cycle proves anew that the supposed contribution limits don't really limit money in politics, but do drive political money underground and make it more difficult for voters to know who's giving to whom.

So-called "independent expenditures" have exploded, many from grandiosely named front groups that do not have to disclose their financial sources.

Moneyed interests, from the presidential level downward, not only wield more influence than ever, but they and their favored politicians now have a vested interest in maintaining the supposed limits so that they can hide what they do.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Nevada should consider online gaming partners

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Two of the state's largest slot machine manufacturers received Nevada's first interactive gaming licenses in June. Regulators could license three more suppliers this month.

Another 30-plus casino operators and gaming equipment providers have interactive license applications on file with the Gaming Control Board. If all goes as planned, gaming regulators could rule on two or three applications per month well into 2013.

Meanwhile, Nevada has handed the technology certification process for Internet gaming systems to two of the industry's largest testing laboratories, which have certified the equipment used in legal online gaming worldwide.

Based on industry talk, Nevada could have 20 online gaming websites launched in 2013. So why must online poker players wait even longer to place their bets?

Numbers.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Independence Day should be a time for U.S. to unite

What would the founding fathers of the Unites States think today of the country they helped form in 1776?

What will people 236 years from now say about 2012?

If only there were crystal balls or time machines to answer those questions.



Fireworks will again light up the sky in Lake Tahoe on July 4. Photo/Howie Nave

While we are on the eve of celebrating the birth of this country, perhaps now is a good time to ponder what these United States of America are all about.

Each of the states has a tremendous uniqueness and in its own right could be a country unto itself. Diversity is everywhere – in terrain, climate, political beliefs, economies, and more.

But there is something in all of our originality that binds us as a nation, as a people.

Lake Tahoe News believes it is the richness of our individual differences – as people and states – that strengthens us as a country. While we often pick apart the differences, it is the similarities that bind us.

We are strong. We are individuals. We are thinkers. We are community-minded. We believe in life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

Yes, we differ in defining happiness or how to pursue it and even what liberty means.

But take a step back – where else could you go and be able to state your opinion so freely, be so free to disagree with the government, so free to burn the flag that protects your right to burn it?

While no country is perfect, no form of government is perfect, and certainly the people running the country are not perfect, what we have is pretty close to perfection.

If we were all to embrace the good that binds us, wouldn't that make for less hate, and less pain and suffering?

We are a country that prides itself in singing about bombs bursting in air. What if we channeled that energy into something positive?

Take some time as we celebrate the birth of the United States to look at your neighbors, your colleagues, the visitors in town, everyone and realize we are one people – no matter what we look like or who we vote for. We are the United State of America.

Opinion: Google cars data collection warrant scrutiny

By John M. Simpson, Special to the Sacramento Bee

What do autonomous cars driven by robots like those Google is developing have to do with your privacy? If the answer is nothing, then why won't Google and the author of a bill to allow them on California highways accept an amendment requiring that the new technology collect only data necessary for the operation of the vehicle and no other purpose?

You may remember the last time Google deployed high-tech vehicles around the world. The result was "Wi-Spy," the biggest wire-tapping scandal in history when the company's Street View cars sucked up data from tens of millions of private Wi-Fi networks, including emails, health information, banking information, passwords and other data.

We don't want that to happen again. If amended, Sen. Alex Padilla's Senate Bill 1298 could offer privacy protection. The Assembly Transportation Committee heard testimony about the bill last week and held it over for action Monday.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Fed data proves Gen

Xers are losing economic ground

By Maria Panaritis, Philadelphia Inquirer

It was shocking enough to hear this week that median American family wealth in 2010 had plunged to 1992 levels. But imagine this equally alarming detail that didn't get headlines: Generation Xers – those who hit the workforce in the late 1980s and early 1990s – got more scorched than any other group.

Before laying out the ugly numbers, let's think about what this portends for anyone who ascribes to America's promise that kids can do better than their parents: If Gen X is failing, we all should be worried.

The Federal Reserve data behind this conclusion reinforces something I've been writing about for several years now, as a relatively lone voice in the nation's press corps: Gen Xers have been decimated financially at a fragile time, while forming households and raising young families, those ordinary coming-of-age endeavors. Their massive loss of wealth occurred in "prime" earning years, when people squirrel away money to pay for bills down the road.

When, if ever, does this Lost Generation even start to catch up, considering the grim pace of economic recovery? Policymakers already are talking about cutting Social Security payments and other social safety-net benefits for Xers come retirement. This is a crisis in the making.

The Fed's findings compound earlier research showing that, for years, this group of Americans born between 1964 and 1980 (though the agreed-upon definition varies) has been doing worse than the generation that preceded them.

Read the whole story