

# **Environmental measures were big winners in Calif.**

**By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group**

Most voters already know that Gavin Newsom and Dianne Feinstein – who easily advanced to the November general election in their races for governor and U.S. senator – were among the big winners in Tuesday's California primary election.

But there's another group also popping the champagne this week: environmentalists.

Across California and the Bay Area, environmental groups had one of their best elections ever. They won nearly every major race they contested, securing billions of dollars for Lake Tahoe, parks, beaches, water projects and public transportation, and at the same time helped kill plans to develop Silicon Valley hillsides and a proposal to change the way the state spends money from its greenhouse gas auctions.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Federal cannabis bill would help businesses get banking**

**By Kimberly Veklerov, San Francisco Chronicle**

A bipartisan effort in Congress to ease federal restrictions on cannabis, which President Trump said Friday he is inclined to support, would solve a few of the biggest problems facing

the nascent industry in California, experts say.

Most important, they say, the bill introduced Thursday – which gives states the authority to create their own marijuana laws – would open the door to banking for businesses by declaring that cannabis activities that comply with state rules do not constitute “trafficking” and their proceeds, therefore, are not the fruits of illegal transactions.

“It’s a really elegant solution,” said Hezekiah Allen, executive director of the California Growers Association, an advocacy group for hundreds of marijuana farmers, business owners and patients in the state. “It doesn’t go all the way, but it does alleviate some of the day-to-day challenges we face.”

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## **Grand jury wants EDC to better deal with CalPERS**

**Updated 8:45am:**

**By Kathryn Reed**

From the El Dorado County Grand Jury report that was released last week one might conclude only one entity in the county has an issue with CalPERS.

This would be because the grand jury only investigated El Dorado County. It didn’t touch on the two cities in the county – South Lake Tahoe and Placerville – or utility, fire and other special districts that have obligations to the state retirement system. And if the grand jurors had wanted to take

it a step further, they could have delved into CalSTRS, the teachers' retirement system.

Jurors did not explain why the county was the target of the investigation.

Here are the findings from the grand jury:

- The unfunded CalPERS liability for El Dorado County is \$346 million as of July 2016.
- El Dorado County pays annual CalPERS payments monthly, resulting in interest charges payable to CalPERS.
- El Dorado County pays only the minimum amount due to CalPERS; it does not make additional payments to reduce the UAL [Unfunded accrued liability.]
- El Dorado County has an established policy to set aside additional funding for post-employment benefits, but not specifically for CalPERS obligations.
- Historically, El Dorado County has not provided information to the public about its CalPERS obligation in a way that clearly illuminates the scope of the pension obligation.

The grand jury recommended increasing contributions to CalPERS to pay down the debt, and creating a dedicated trust just for that purpose.

There were no suggestions as to where this added money would come from.

It is not true that the county has not provided information about the issue. CalPERS has been an agenda topic for supervisors, and is part of the annual budget discussions. Plus, the auditor annually provides information about CalPERS.

**Lake Tahoe News** has written about the county's CalPERS

quagmire as well.

The county also isn't alone in having to contend with obligations that keep escalating. Unfunded liability is an issue for every public agency that is part of the system.

"I have read the report. I have not studied the report. I am in general agreement with the report. I have been bringing this issue to the supervisors and the public for years. (CEO) Don Ashton has discussed this matter with the supervisors for the past two years," county Auditor Joe Harn told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I am glad that the grand jury is bringing this matter to the supervisors' and the public's attention again now. It is important to note that this problem is a statewide problem, not just an El Dorado problem."

Supervisor Sue Novasel told LTN, "I agree with their assessment concerning the CalPERS obligation. Our CAO has been very proactive in identifying and addressing this issue. He specifically spoke at length about these issues during our town hall budget talks that we held throughout the county. We have already placed millions of dollars into a special reserve fund for the underfunded retirement system and we plan to identify more as our budget for 2017-18 is developed this month."

It will be the supervisors who must come up with a response to the grand jury per state law. The topic will be on a future agenda.

"Overall, the grand jury report appears to be balanced and fair, highlighting the current board is taking significant steps to set aside funding for future year CalPERS payments and funding for a pensionable trust. However, as the report highlights CalPERS costs will continue to be a significant challenge that will influence other policy decisions in the future and it is critical for county leadership to continue to explore a variety of options in how to handle these cost

increases,” CAO Don Ashton told *Lake Tahoe News*.

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# Pot businesses are on a hiring spree

**By David Goldstein and Anita Chabria, Sacramento Bee**

Eight years ago, Samantha Miller was earning six figures a year as a product developer for a LED lighting company in Northern California when a high school friend called to ask a favor. Would Miller be able to help her friend’s boss at a medical marijuana dispensary figure out how to use a new machine purchased to analyze the quality of pot?

Miller passed on the job, but offered some free advice. With her background in machinery design and lab supervision, she told the dispensary folks: “You need (to hire) a scientist because you are going to ruin that piece of equipment if you don’t know how to run it.”

The dispensary owner ignored her warning and sure enough, Miller soon received a call that the machine had gone kaput. Fed up, the owner offered to give the high-tech device to Miller if she could repair it – and would be willing to test the dispensary’s marijuana for free.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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# Upstart candidates hope to send political shockwaves in Nev.

By Ramona Giwargis, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Going against the “political establishment” is a risky move in Nevada, a purple state where every hard-fought election could shift control of the Statehouse and on Capitol Hill.

Yet some Nevada candidates are running grass-roots campaigns against opponents with much deeper pockets.

State Sen. Patricia “Pat” Spearman is one of five Democratic candidates in the 4th Congressional District, where former Rep. Steven Horsford has plenty of campaign cash and the backing of Nevada’s largest union.

[Read the whole story](#)

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# Docs worry about ability to deal with mass casualty

By Kathryn Reed

If a mass casualty incident occurs on the South Shore, it is going to require the resources of neighboring medical facilities to treat the injured.

“In the event of a mass casualty incident, the main effort would be to ensure rapid transportation to the appropriate

care centers," Selwyn Lee, chief medical officer at Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This would involve field triage by emergency services as well as county assistance to bring in as much help as possible to our hospital. While we do have an outstanding trauma program in place, there are still limitations and the health system could be overwhelmed quickly if the acuity of care is high."

An advantage this area has over others is CalStar being based at Lake Tahoe Airport. CareFlight would also be called in during a tragedy. It is already backup to the primary helicopter ambulance. Plus, there would be ground transport.

Getting patients to another health care facility could be challenging or not even possible depending on the incident and the weather.

Barton has memoranda of understandings with UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, Marshal Hospital in Placerville, Renown Medical Center in Reno and Carson Valley Medical Center.

Barton Memorial Hospital could treat about 20 people; though how busy the emergency room is at the time of the tragedy would be a factor.

Jenna Palacio with Barton said, "In any given large-scale emergency, incident command would dictate the action plan to prioritize, triage and neutralize the situation. Mass casualty incidents can overload even the most advanced medical centers. The key to providing the highest level of care to every patient in need is to utilize any and all available resources within the established trauma system."

A poll done this spring by the American College of Emergency Physicians found that nine out of 10 emergency room doctors don't believe their facilities are completely ready for major disasters.

Stats from the survey of 1,328 doctors include:

- 93 said their emergency room could not handle a surge in patients from a disaster;
- 49 percent labeled their hospital somewhat prepared;
- 90 percent said they would not have enough medication.

Barton has been a level III trauma center for three years. A team of doctors and staff is available around the clock to react to an event. One of the reasons this designation was sought is because of the remoteness of South Lake Tahoe.

“Trauma III designation recognizes Barton Hospital as a critical access point for patients seeking trauma care. Unlike other hospital facilities, trauma centers guarantee the resources for in-depth emergency care and the immediate availability of emergency medicine physicians, surgeons, nurses, lab and X-ray technicians, and life support equipment 24-hours a day,” surgeon Kim Evans told *LTN* in 2015.

Renown is a level two facility, while UC Davis Medical Center is a level one. These levels are usually found in urban centers.

Barton said advantages to the community with it being a trauma center include expanded blood bank capabilities, expedited patient evaluation, priority access to diagnostic technology, increased staff aptitude for traumatic injuries, training standards for care and response timing ensuring patients would be treated within a specific time frame.

Tourniquet training and education in the event of a mass shooting or other traumatic incident is provided by Barton to first responders through a program called Stop the Bleed.

“Uncontrolled bleeding is the No. 1 cause of preventable death from trauma. The greater the number of people who know how to control bleeding with an injured patient, the greater the chances of surviving that injury,” Palacio told *Lake Tahoe*



*News.*

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) is lobbying Congress to pass the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2018, with the goal of the federal government taking a more active role in medical preparedness. It was introduced last month by Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C.

“Hospitals and emergency medical services continue to suffer significant gaps in disaster preparedness, as well as national drug shortages for essential emergency medications,” ACEP President Paul Kivela said in a press release. “These shortages can last for months, or longer, and constitute a significant risk to patients.”

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## **Several Nevada candidates have criminal records**

**By Ramona Giwargis, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

One candidate has been charged with theft and wiretapping. Another was convicted of domestic battery and accused of waving a gun while drunk. One was an Army deserter.

These are a few of the political candidates on the Nevada ballot this year – and it’s causing deep concern in some political circles.

Nevada voters have many choices at the ballot box, including electing a new governor.

**Read the whole story**

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# Caltrans contractor in hot water with TRPA



The contractor working at Emerald Bay is accused of violating the permit.  
Photo/Susan Wood

**By Kathryn Reed**

The contractor doing work on Highway 89 near Emerald Bay could face a slew of violations from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and possibly other agencies.

A video on the White Trash Brigade Facebook page shows workers with Stewart Engineering of Redding, the contractor hired by Caltrans, laughing as a large boulder rolls down the hillside and takes out a tree.

Caltrans did not respond to repeated emails.

TRPA was first notified May 21 about the company allegedly disposing of rocks and asphalt.

“TRPA investigated and found large boulders from the project area and tailings of sediment and asphalt extending down onto

California State Parks property, with damage to trees, slope destabilization, and impacts to a stream environment zone in this highly sensitive natural area,” Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for the bi-state regulatory agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

At that time a cease and desist order was issued until the company came into compliance with the permit which mandated erosion control measures be in place and to adhere to other aspects of the contract.

TRPA officials went back out to the site on June 7 and said the company was still violating the permit. Stewart was given 24 hours to fix the problems or have the site shutdown. TRPA will be back out there this afternoon to see where the project stands.

“TRPA is continuing to investigate this incident for potential civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per day for each code violation, and is also working with Caltrans and California State Parks on a plan to clean up and restore areas impacted by this unfortunate incident,” Lotshaw said.

Because this is an ongoing investigation the number of violations has not been determined.

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**Publisher’s note:** There is profanity in **the video** that may be offensive to some people.

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**Homeless damaging sensitive**

# S. Tahoe landscape



Known as The Mayor in the homeless encampment, he wishes South Lake Tahoe had a shelter. Photo/Kathryn Reed

## By Kathryn Reed

A homeless encampment of about 20 individuals in the middle of South Lake Tahoe has been given a seven-day notice to move on or else they'll be forcibly removed.

Tucked into the meadow off the bike path behind Motel 6 is a community hidden from most people. Tents and makeshift shelters protect them from the elements. Cooking devices vary from crude stoves to old barbecues. Some have coolers. Bikes are common.

Wood has been cut from the area for fencing and other uses.





Mr. Cotter is responsible for building the bridges.  
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Two sturdy bridges – built well, maybe even to code – cross what would have been wet areas not that long ago.

Well-worn paths lead from one “home” to the next. It used to be the paths were narrower, with better tree canopy.

“Most people out here are local people. They have found a safe, positive environment. A good place to sleep,” says The Mayor. This man has been out here on and off for three years, having lived here through the last winter.



Officer Johnny Spaeth is trying to build a rapport with the people living in the woods. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He laments about the lack of affordable and low-income housing. He said so many come into the meadow with only their paperwork from jail. Their options are limited.

Some who call this area home have jobs. What they don't have is a traditional home.

"The city really needs a shelter," The Mayor told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The city's shelter is the county jail in a lot of ways."

His home is one of the larger areas, with some nicer elements like a hammock.

If this weren't on private land (it's owned by Knox Johnson), and harming the environment (trash, human feces, needles, illegal wood harvesting, illegal trail building, trampling an incredibly sensitive landscape) it would be an ideal location



to pitch a tent. It's walking distance to the lake, the bike path, public transit, a grocery store and many other amenities.



Propane canisters the homeless had been using.  
Photo/Kathryn Reed

"We're always going to have a homeless issue. The idea is to make it the least impactful on the environment and community," Officer Johnny Spaeth told *Lake Tahoe News*. He is South Lake Tahoe Police Department's homeless expert. "A red line for us is open flame," Spaeth says as he looks at where briquettes had been started on the ground and have left a visible imprint.

While South Lake Tahoe has had a homeless population for years, last year was the first time an actual encampment started to form. This year it's a true community.



The entrance to this site is on the other side, with rooms sectioned off. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Spaeth knows most of the individuals by name. He knows which “home” belongs to each person. Still, what they are doing – camping outside a designated campground – is illegal.

He understands they are “just trying to get by in life,” but at the same time with so many people in the meadow it is degrading the natural environment, and presents health and safety concerns.

Spaeth has been working with the people to get them to clean up the mess. The department provided them a dumpster to get rid of things. It’s behind the old Carrows and is nearly full of what looks like trash. Next to it are seven propane canisters these people had been using that they hauled out.





Officer Johnny Spaeth listens to Matt tell him how he's gotten rid of most of his junk. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Matt thanks Spaeth for working him, giving him time to sort through his stuff.

"It's just down to the basics for me," Matt tells the officer. He says someone, though, has been mining the dumpster and taking goods.

A decades-old backpack hangs from a tree. A tarp covers things. A bike and books are in the open.

These people have been creative with the resources they have. They've repurposed items to make it work for them.

On June 7 people in the encampment received official notification from law enforcement that they have seven days to move out, though Spaeth had been telling them this day was coming, which is why the dumpster was brought in. Anything left behind will be considered abandoned property and will be considered trash.

Where they will go is anyone's guess.

The Mayor called it a game of hide and seek. But the cops always seem to find them.



This tent is for storage because the homeless have issues with food and wildlife. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Dispersed camping is what the homeless have traditionally done here – meaning there's a tent here and there, not a community. This is less impactful to the environment because people pick up and move on. There isn't the wear and tear on the land.

Spaeth said when appropriate officers will help people get connected to social services, but he acknowledges "resources in the basin are limited."

Most of the people in this encampment are men between the ages of 20 and 40, though for the last month or so three women have consistently been here.



Arresting them isn't what officers want to do. After all, being homeless isn't a crime. Where they pitch a tent, that's what crosses the line – and potentially some behavioral issues could get them in trouble with the cops. There have been fights and issues with aggressive dogs, things that can happen in any neighborhood.

“More people come out here every day. They have nowhere else to go,” The Mayor said. In less than a week, though, this meadow will be off-limits.

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# **Heller wants to prevent future Nev. wilderness designations**

**By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal**

Republican Sen. Dean Heller is seeking to leverage one-party control of Congress and the White House with an idea for a bill that would block future wilderness designations in Nevada.

Heller, who is running for re-election and considered the most vulnerable Republican in the Senate, says he plans to introduce legislation “within weeks” that would strip protections from potentially dozens of designated wilderness study areas.

A wilderness advocate who has worked with Nevada's federal delegation on conservation legislation called Heller's idea a “radical departure” from prior, bipartisan public lands bills.

**Read the whole story**