

Groups pursue increase to education funding in Nev.

By Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A campaign aiming to force the Nevada Legislature to put more money into the state's schools is ramping up its efforts.

Fund Our Future Nevada, which launched in February, wants lawmakers to dedicate more money for Nevada schools by increasing the state's per pupil spending. The coalition – which includes parents, teachers and community activists – is spearheaded by Educate Nevada Now, an education-focused nonprofit, and Hope for Nevada, a parent advocacy group.

[Read the whole story](#)

Water rights could drown 3-Calif. idea

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Splitting California into three new states would scramble nearly every segment of government that touches residents' lives, from taxes to Medi-Cal to driver's licenses.

New agencies would have to be created to operate prisons, highways and universities. CalPERS, CalSTRS, Cal Fire and the California Highway Patrol, to name a few, would have to be reconfigured and replaced.

But of all the gargantuan tasks facing Californians should

they choose to divide themselves by three – a proposal that has qualified for the November ballot – none is arguably more daunting than carving up the state’s water supply.

Read the whole story

Immigration dominates Sessions’ talk in Reno



Protesters almost canceled Attorney Jeff Sessions’ talk on June 25 in Reno.
Photo/Linda Fine Conaboy

By Linda Fine Conaboy

RENO – Attorney General Jeff Sessions stayed true to the party line Monday as he defended the president’s policy on immigration saying children are the target of MS-13, an international criminal gang that originated in Los Angeles in the 1980s.

Sessions gave the keynote address June 25, opening the national gathering of school resource officers who are in Reno this week attending their convention. NASRO, the National Association of School Resource Officers, evidently approved and appreciated that Sessions was at their meeting, handing him two standing ovations.

As the gathering of more than 1,000 got under way inside, a group of protesters loudly showed their disapproval outside. Horns honked, a group of Native Americans chanted and drummed, and a mariachi band in full regalia added their support to the protest.



Jeff Sessions

Not to be deterred by protesters, the keynote address proceeded as scheduled with Sessions' opening remarks giving a nod to his audience as he mentioned that research shows many young people are turning to the law now as a profession.

Why? "Because they know someone in law enforcement and consider it a noble profession, just like in the Department of Justice," he said. "When there's a tragedy, we believe it's important to be there and have your back."

He also announced that the DOJ was allocating \$2 million for Las Vegas after the October shooting and \$1 million to officers in Broward County, Fla.

Although he was expected to stick to the topic of school safety, this was not the case. Reading from his prepared speech, he minced no words as he got right to immigration,

saying children bear the burden of a broken immigration system. Safety of children is important, he said, adding that our government spends large amounts of money on children brought to the U.S. illegally.

“If we refused to prosecute adults, it would be a disservice to people in the U.S. It will also encourage people to bring more children illegally.” He also stated that the president advised that “we will avoid separating families. It’s a great effort”

Moreover, he added, adults are being arrested because they refuse to enter the United States at a port of entry. “There would be no crime or arrests if they entered at ports of entry. This should not be happening in the U.S.” He said he has spent days, months and years trying to develop ways to enforce these laws, but he said Congress needs to help.

He said the United States is seeing an increase in children coming here alone. Sessions said often they’re watching as adults get involved in drugs; he added that the vast majority of drugs come here across borders, which are not secure. Open borders are radical and dangerous and not good, he declared.

“The president has made it clear that we need a relationship with our partners in the south. Think about this. In just four days at the end of March, Customs and Border Protection apprehended five juveniles who were allegedly smuggling fentanyl. The killer drug. Between the five of them, they allegedly had more than 35 pounds of fentanyl—enough to kill millions of people.”

He said MS-13 is a particularly violent group, adding that if someone unlawfully comes into our country who committed acts against children, they should be deported, not protected by sanctuary policies. He highlighted what he said were examples of children being victimized by undocumented immigrants already in the U.S.

He also said MS-13 is recruiting children who were sent here as unaccompanied minors, saying some are brought to help replenish the gang and that they are terrorizing immigrant schools and communities all across the country.

Sessions said free speech and assembly rights will be protected, but criminals will be prosecuted.

“We will invest and continue to invest in law enforcement.”

He offered kudos to what he called the unsung heroes and thanked them for committing their lives to protecting the most vulnerable among us.

Why turning homelessness into a crime is cruel and costly

By Joseph W. Mead and Sara Rankin, *The Conversation*

Increasingly, local laws punish Americans who are homeless.

By severely restricting or even barring the ability to engage in necessary, life-sustaining activities in public, like sitting, standing, sleeping or asking for help, even when there's no reasonable alternative, these laws are essentially persecuting homeless men, women and children.

As law professors who study how laws can make homelessness better or worse, we encourage cities, suburbs and towns to avoid punishing people who live in public and have nowhere else to go. One big reason: These “anti-vagrancy laws” are counterproductive because they make it harder to escape homelessness.

Many paths to not having a home

Why do at least half a million Americans experience homelessness at any time?

Researchers find that most people who become homeless have nowhere to live after being evicted, losing their jobs or fleeing an abusive partner.

Many emergency homeless shelters are perpetually full. Even those with beds to spare may enforce rules that exclude families, LGBTQ youth and people with pets.

And when homeless people can stay in shelters, often they may only spend the night there. That means they have to go somewhere else during the daytime.

More laws

As the number of people facing homelessness increases, local residents are demanding that their elected officials do something about the homeless people they encounter in their daily lives. The leaders of cities, towns and suburbs are often responsive.

But more often than not, municipalities don't address the underlying problems that cause homelessness by, say, providing sufficient permanent housing, affordable housing or shelters with minimal barriers to entry. Instead, criminalizing homelessness is growing more popular.

Over the last decade, citywide bans on camping in public have increased by 69 percent while citywide panhandling bans rose by 43 percent, according to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

Advocates such as the American Civil Liberties Union frequently challenge these laws in court. Judges often strike down such laws on the grounds that they violate constitutionally protected rights, such as the freedom of

speech or due process.

Still, more and more communities keep trying to outlaw homelessness.

Criminalizing homelessness is ineffective

Not only do we and other legal experts find these laws to be unconstitutional, we see ample evidence that they waste tax dollars.

Cities are aggressively deploying law enforcement to target people simply for the crime of existing while having nowhere to live. In 2016 alone, Los Angeles police arrested 14,000 people experiencing homelessness for everyday activities such as sitting on sidewalks.

San Francisco is spending about \$20 million per year to enforce laws against loitering, panhandling and other common conduct against people experiencing homelessness.

Jails and prisons make extremely expensive and ineffective homeless shelters. Non-punitive alternatives, such as permanent supportive housing and mental health or substance abuse treatment, cost less and work better, according to research one of us is doing at the Homeless Rights Advocacy Project at Seattle University Law School and many other sources.

But the greatest cost of these laws is borne by already vulnerable people who are ticketed, arrested and jailed because they are experiencing homelessness.

Fines and court fees quickly add up to hundreds or thousands of dollars. A Sacramento man, for example, found himself facing \$100,000 in fines for convictions for panhandling and sleeping outside. These costs are impossible to pay, since the "crimes" were committed by dint of being unable to afford keeping a roof over his head in the first place.

And since having a criminal record makes getting jobs and housing much harder, these laws are perpetuating homelessness.

Joseph W. Mead is an assistant professor at Cleveland State University and Sara Rankin is a professor of lawyering skills at Seattle University.

Initiative to repeal Calif. gas tax qualifies for Nov. ballot

By Melody Gutierrez, San Francisco Chronicle

California voters will decide whether to repeal newly enacted gas taxes and vehicle registration fees that fund road repairs under a ballot initiative that will appear on the November ballot.

Proponents of the repeal turned in more than the 585,407 valid signatures needed to qualify for the November ballot. The measure would remove the transportation taxes and fees approved by the Legislature last year under SB1, which is expected to raise \$5 billion a year to pay for the state's roads and bridges.

The ballot measure would remove the 12 cent per gallon increase in the state's gas excise tax and the added 20 cent per gallon increase in the excise tax on diesel fuel, which is used by the commercial trucking industry. Vehicle registration fee increases that began in January would also be repealed. Those fees raised registration costs by \$25 to \$175 depending on the value of the vehicle.

Read the whole story

DUI suspected in midday rollover on South Shore

A driver for Boulder Exterminator was arrested on charges of driving under the influence after crashing a company truck on North Upper Truckee Road in Meyers.

Joseph Toller, 50, of Gardnerville sustained moderate injuries in the June 25, 1:15pm accident. He was transported to Barton Memorial Hospital.

“He was going too fast and left the side of the road,” CHP Officer Mike Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*. He wasn’t sure how many times the truck rolled. It ended up landing on the roof.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Cutthroat saloon returns in Markleeville

Markleeville’s legendary Cutthroat saloon is getting a new lease on life.

It has changed hands, and the new owner is restoring the name. Fawna Demond, who has periodically worked at the bar, is the

new owner.

When Tom Abdoo bought the bar and restaurant in 2002 he renamed it the Wolf Creek Bar & Restaurant. He gutted the place, which included getting rid of all the bras that hung from the rafters.

Besides the name, Demond also plans to bring back some of menu items that were popular pre-Abdoo. The Cutthroat will be serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Airbnb to collect TOT for El Dorado County

El Dorado County has worked out a deal with Airbnb for the short-term rental company to collect transient occupancy tax.

This is something the city of South Lake Tahoe has been trying to do to no avail.

Airbnb will start doing this for the unincorporated area of the county starting Aug. 1.

Jurisdictions prefer rental platforms collect the tax because then they don't have to rely on the renter to fill out what is usually a quarterly form, and then having the individual send in the necessary payment. This is an issue everywhere with renters not paying the tax.

Airbnb now has agreements with more than 400 municipalities to collect TOT.

Staff: EPA mission changing under Trump

By Chris Sellers, Lindsey Dillon and Phil Brown, The Conversation

The Environmental Protection Agency made news recently for excluding reporters from a “summit” meeting on chemical contamination in drinking water. Episodes like this are symptoms of a larger problem: an ongoing, broad-scale takeover of the agency by industries it regulates.

We are social scientists with interests in environmental health, environmental justice and inequality and democracy. We recently published a study, conducted under the auspices of the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative and based on interviews with 45 current and retired EPA employees, which concludes that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and the Trump administration have steered the agency to the verge of what scholars call “regulatory capture.”

By this we mean that they are aggressively reorganizing the EPA to promote interests of regulated industries, at the expense of its official mission to “protect human health and the environment.”

How close is too close?

The notion of “regulatory capture” has a long record in U.S. social science research. It helps explain the 2008 financial crisis and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. In both

cases, lax federal oversight and the government's over-reliance on key industries were widely viewed as contributing to the disasters.

How can you tell whether an agency has been captured? According to Harvard's David Moss and Daniel Carpenter, it occurs when an agency's actions are "directed away from the public interest and toward the interest of the regulated industry" by "intent and action of industries and their allies." In other words, the farmer doesn't just tolerate foxes lurking around the hen house – he recruits them to guard it.

Serving industry

From the start of his tenure at EPA, Pruitt has championed interests of regulated industries such as petrochemicals and coal mining, while rarely discussing the value of environmental and health protections. "Regulators exist," he asserts, "to give certainty to those that they regulate," and should be committed to "enhanc(ing) economic growth."

In our view, Pruitt's efforts to undo, delay or otherwise block at least 30 existing rules reorient EPA rule-making "away from the public interest and toward the interest of the regulated industry." Our interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that these rollbacks undermine their own "pretty strong sense of mission ... protecting the health of the environment," as one current EPA staffer told us.

Many of these targeted rules have well-documented public benefits, which Pruitt's proposals – assuming they withstand legal challenges – would erode. For example, rejecting a proposed ban on the insecticide chlorpyrifos would leave farm workers and children at risk of developmental delays and autism spectrum disorders. Revoking the Clean Power Plan for coal-fired power plants, and weakening proposed fuel efficiency standards, would sacrifice health benefits

associated with cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

A key question is whether regulated industries had an active hand in these initiatives. Here, again, the answer is yes.

Nuzzling up to industry

Pruitt's EPA is staffed with senior officials who have close industry ties. For example, Deputy Administrator Andrew Wheeler is a former coal industry lobbyist. Nancy Beck, deputy assistant administrator of EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, was formerly an executive at the American Chemistry Council. And Senior Deputy General Counsel Erik Baptist was previously senior counsel at the American Petroleum Institute.

Documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show Pruitt has met with representatives of regulated industries 25 times more often than with environmental advocates. His staff carefully shields him from encounters with groups that they consider "unfriendly."

The former head of EPA's Office of Policy, Samantha Dravis, who left the agency in April, had 90 scheduled meetings with energy, manufacturing and other industrial interests between March 2017 and January 2018. During the same period she met with one public interest organization.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that corporate lobbying is directly influencing major policy decisions. For example, just before rejecting the chlorpyrifos ban, Pruitt met with the CEO of Dow Chemical, which manufactures the pesticide.

Overturing Obama's Clean Power Plan and withdrawing from the Paris climate accord were recommended by coal magnate Robert Murray in his "Action Plan for the Administration." Emails released under the Freedom of Information Act show detailed correspondence between Pruitt and industry lobbyists about EPA talking points. They also document Pruitt's many visits with

corporate officials as he formulated his attack on the Clean Power Plan.

Muting other voices

Pruitt and his staff also have sought to sideline potentially countervailing interests and influences, starting with EPA career staff. In one of our interviews, an EPA employee described a meeting between Pruitt, the home-building industry and agency career staff. Pruitt showed up late, led the industry representatives into another room for a group photo, then trooped back into the meeting room to scold his own EPA employees for not listening to them.

Threatened by proposed budget cuts, buyouts and retribution against disloyal staff and leakers, career EPA employees have been made “afraid ... so nobody pushes back, nobody says anything,” according to one of our sources.

As a result, enforcement has fallen dramatically. During Trump’s first six months in office, the EPA collected 60 percent less money in civil penalties from polluters than it had under Presidents Obama or George W. Bush in the same period. The agency has also opened fewer civil and criminal cases.

Early in his tenure Pruitt replaced many members of EPA’s Science Advisory Board and Board of Scientific Counselors in a move intended to give representatives from industry and state governments more influence. He also established a new policy that prevents EPA-funded scientists from serving on these boards, but allows industry-funded scientists to serve.

And on April 24, 2018, Pruitt issued a new rule that limits what kind of scientific research the agency can rely on in writing environmental regulation. This step was advocated by the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Petroleum Institute.

What can be done?

This is not the first time that a strongly anti-regulatory administration has tried to redirect EPA. In our interviews, longtime EPA staffers recalled similar pressure under President Reagan, led by his first administrator, Anne Gorsuch.

Gorsuch also slashed budgets, cut back on enforcement and “treated a lot of people in the agency as the enemy,” in the words of her successor, William Ruckelshaus. She was forced to resign in 1983 amid congressional investigations into EPA misbehavior, including corruptive favoritism and its cover-up at the Superfund program.

EPA veterans of those years emphasized the importance of Democratic majorities in Congress, which initiated the investigations, and sustained media coverage of EPA’s unfolding scandals. They remembered this phase as an oppressive time, but noted that pro-industry actions by political appointees failed to suffuse the entire bureaucracy. Instead, career staffers resisted by developing subtle, “underground” ways of supporting each other and sharing information internally and with Congress and the media.

Similarly, the media are spotlighting Pruitt’s policy actions and ethical scandals today. EPA staffers who have left the agency are speaking out against Pruitt’s policies. State attorneys general and the court system have also thwarted some of Pruitt’s efforts. And EPA’s Science Advisory Board – including members appointed by Pruitt – recently voted almost unanimously to do a full review of the scientific justification for many of Pruitt’s most controversial proposals.

Still, with the Trump administration tilted hard against regulation and Republicans controlling Congress, the greatest challenge to regulatory capture at the EPA will be the 2018

and 2020 elections.

Chris Sellers is a professor of history and director of the Center for the Study of Inequalities, Social Justice, and Policy, Stony Brook University (State University of New York); Lindsey Dillon is an assistant professor of sociology, UC Santa Cruz; and Phil Brown is a university distinguished professor of sociology and health sciences, Northeastern University.

5 rescued from capsized boat in Washoe Lake

By Sam Gross, Reno Gazette-Journal

First responders rescued five people Saturday night after their boat capsized in Washoe Lake.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Chief Charlie Moore told the Reno Gazette Journal Sunday that they found five people “clinging to the sides of a capsized watercraft” roughly a half-mile from shore.

Read the whole story