

Brown OKs permanent residential water restrictions

By Taryn Luna and Alexei Koseff, Sacramento Bee

The drought may be over, but California residents should prepare themselves for new and more permanent restrictions on water use.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed a pair of bills Thursday to set permanent overall targets for indoor and outdoor water consumption.

Assembly Bill 1668 by Assemblywoman Laura Friedman, D-Glendale, and Senate Bill 606 from state Sen. Bob Hertzberg, D-Los Angeles, give water districts more flexibility than the strict cuts mandated under Brown's emergency drought order and will eventually allow state regulators to assess thousands of dollars in fines against jurisdictions that do not meet the goals.

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Study: Drugged driving on the rise

By Nathan Bomey, USA Today

Drugs are being detected in a growing share of drivers responsible for fatal crashes, according to a new study by the

Governors Highway Safety Association.

Although it's difficult to tell when drugged driving is a cause of accidents, the findings provide fresh reason for concern that marijuana and opioids are driving a growing safety crisis on American roadways.

Some 44 percent of drivers killed in crashes in 2016 who were tested afterward had drugs in their system, according to the GHSA study.

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Tahoe casinos post gains in April

Casinos on both ends of Lake Tahoe posted gaming wins for April.

Stateline casinos were up 12.6 percent compared to 2017 at \$14.9 million. Slot play was the big factor, which was up 21.3 percent, according to the Gaming Control Board.

On the North Shore the win was a modest 1.2 percent increase over a year ago at \$1.6 million,

Statewide the win was \$67.1 million, for a 7.57 percent rise from April 2017. This was the first time in 2018 the state didn't hit the \$1 billion mark.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Algae bloom resurfaces in Tahoe Keys canals



Signs are back up in the Tahoe Keys warning about the algae bloom. Photo/LTN

By Lake Tahoe News

An algae bloom in the Tahoe Keys similar to what cropped up **last August** is back.

“We started monitoring for this at the beginning of April. We found it at multiple locations in the Keys,” Greg Hoover, with the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association’s water quality staff, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Cyanobacteria, which is better known as blue-green algae, was found to be at low toxic levels at three locations in mid-May and when retested a week ago was found at only one location.

Hoover said it’s possible the contaminant is left over from

last year and not necessarily a new outbreak. He said this is because the canals in the South Lake Tahoe neighborhood had little ice on them this past winter. The algal bloom does not like cold.

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is monitoring how the Keys is handling the situation.

Large signs have been posted in various locations warning people not to come into contact with the water. The biggest threat is to dogs and children who might swallow the water.

“We are a little surprised to see it identified so early in the season,” Dan Sussman with Lahontan told *LTN*. This is in part because of the amount of rain that fell in May and that there was not sustained warm temperatures in the last month. “There could be more blooms as it warms up.”

Testing will be ongoing.

Illegal pot grows continue despite change in law

By Peter Fimrite, San Francisco Chronicle

The legalization of cannabis in California has done almost nothing to halt illegal marijuana growing by Mexican drug cartels, which are laying bare large swaths of national forest in California, poisoning wildlife, and siphoning precious water out of creeks and rivers, U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott said Tuesday.

The situation is so dire that federal, state and local law

enforcement officials are using \$2.5 million from the Trump administration this year to crack down on illegal growers, who Scott said have been brazenly setting booby traps, confronting hikers and attacking federal drug-sniffing dogs with knives.

Instead of fading away after legal marijuana retail sales went into effect this year, the problem has gotten worse, according to Scott, who was joined in a news conference Tuesday in Sacramento by California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and other federal forestry and law enforcement officials.

Read the whole story

Hantavirus tied to death of Tahoe-area resident

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Health officials in Placer County say a Tahoe-area resident died after contracting hantavirus.

According to a statement from county health officials, rodents at the home where the resident lived and worked were the likely source, health officials said.

They said the public is not at risk from the source tied to the resident's death.

Read the whole story

Calif. moves a step closer to net neutrality

By Levi Sumagaysay, Bay Area News Group

The California State Senate on Wednesday approved a net neutrality bill that has been called the “gold standard” of such bills in the nation, as states grapple with a controversial repeal of Obama-era federal rules meant to ensure an open internet.

The state senate voted 23 to 12 to adopt SB 822, the bill by State Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, in another rebuke to the Trump administration on this issue.

The majority-Republican Federal Communications Commission, led by Chairman Ajit Pai, who was named to his position by President Trump, repealed the 2015 Open Internet Rules in December. Pai said the net neutrality rules amounted to government overreach and hurt broadband investment.

Read the whole story

Vacation searches up, signaling strong economy

By Fred Imbert, CNBC

The U.S. economy seems to be on solid footing, according to one unusual indicator: vacation searches on the internet.

Google searches for the term “vacation” rose 10 percent in

April on a year-over-year basis, said Nicholas Colas, co-founder of DataTrek Research, using Google Trends data.

This is positive for the U.S. economy, Colas said, as U.S. workers are usually reluctant to take time off from work.

Read the whole story

Mayors are advancing climate-friendly policies

By Nicolas Gunkel, The Conversation

Leadership in addressing climate change in the United States has shifted away from Washington, D.C. Cities across the country are organizing, networking and sharing resources to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and tackle related challenges ranging from air pollution to heat island effects.

But group photos at climate change summits typically feature big-city Democratic mayors rubbing shoulders. Republicans are rarer, with a few notable exceptions, such as Kevin Faulconer of San Diego and James Brainard of Carmel, Ind.

Faulconer co-chairs the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100 Percent Clean Energy Initiative, which rallies mayors around a shared commitment to power their cities entirely with clean and renewable energy. Brainard is a longtime champion of the issue within the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Climate Mayors network.

In our research at the Boston University Initiative on Cities, we found that large-city Republican mayors shy away from climate network memberships and their associated framing of

the problem. But in many cases they advocate locally for policies that help advance climate goals for other reasons, such as fiscal responsibility and public health. In short, the United States is making progress on this issue in some surprising places.

Climate network members are mainly Democrats

In our initiative's recent report, "Cities Joining Ranks," we systematically reviewed which U.S. cities belong to 10 prominent city climate networks. These networks, often founded by mayors themselves, provide platforms to exchange information, advocate for urban priorities and strengthen city governments' technical capacities.

The networks we assessed included Climate Mayors; We Are Still In, which represents organizations that continue to support action to meet the targets in the Paris climate agreement; and ICLEI USA.

We found a clear partisan divide between Republican and Democrat mayors. On average, Republican-led cities with more than 75,000 residents belong to less than one climate network. In contrast, cities with Democratic mayors belonged to an average of four networks. Among the 100 largest U.S. cities, of which 29 have Republican mayors and 63 have Democrats, Democrat-led cities are more than four times more likely to belong to at least one climate network.

This split has implications for city-level climate action. Joining these networks sends a very public signal to constituents about the importance of safeguarding the environment, transitioning to cleaner forms of energy and addressing climate change. Some networks require cities to plan for or implement specific greenhouse gas reduction targets and report on their progress, which means that mayors can be held accountable.

Constituents in Republican-led cities support climate policies

Cities can also reduce their carbon footprints and stay under the radar – a strategy that is popular with Republican mayors. Taking the findings of the “Cities Joining Ranks” report as a starting point, I explored support for climate policies in Republican-led cities and the level of ambition and transparency in their climate plans.

To tackle these questions, I cross-referenced Republican-led cities with data from the Yale Climate Opinion maps, which provide insight into county-level support for four climate policies:

- Regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant
- Imposing strict carbon dioxide emission limits on existing coal-fired power plants
- Funding research into renewable energy sources
- Requiring utilities to produce 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources.

In all of the 10 largest U.S. cities that have Republican mayors and also voted Republican in the 2008 presidential election, county-level polling data showed majority support for all four climate policies. Examples included Jacksonville, Fla., and Fort Worth, Texas. None of these cities participated in any of the 10 climate networks that we reviewed in our report.

This finding suggests that popular support exists for action on climate change, and that residents of these cities who advocate acting could lobby their elected officials to join climate networks. Indeed, we have found that one of the top three reasons mayors join city policy networks is because it signals their priorities. A mayor of a medium-sized West Coast city told us: “Your constituents are expecting you to represent them, so we are trying politically to be their voice.”

Climate-friendly strategies, but few emissions targets

Next I reviewed planning documents from the 29 largest U.S. cities that are led by Republican mayors. Among this group, 15 have developed or are developing concrete goals that guide their efforts to improve local environmental quality. Many of these actions reduce cities' carbon footprints, although they are not primarily framed that way.

Rather, these cities most frequently cast targets for achieving energy savings and curbing local air pollution as part of their master plans. Some package them as part of dedicated sustainability strategies.

These agendas often evoke images of disrupted ecosystems that need to be conserved, or that endanger human health and quality of life. Some also spotlight cost savings from designing infrastructure to cope with more extreme weather events.

In contrast, only seven cities in this group had developed quantitative greenhouse gas reduction targets. Except for Miami, all of them are in California, which requires its cities to align their greenhouse gas reduction targets with state plans. From planning documents it appears that none of the six Californian cities goes far beyond minimum mandated emission reductions set by the state for 2020.

Watch what they do, not what they say

The real measure of Republican mayors taking action on climate change is not the number of networks they join but the policy steps they take, often quietly, at home. While few Republican mayors may attend the next round of sub-national climate summits, many have set out policy agendas that mitigate climate change, without calling a lot of attention to it – much like a number of rural U.S. communities. Focusing narrowly on policy labels and public commitments by mayors fails to capture the various forms of local climate action, especially in GOP-led cities.

Carmel, Ind., Mayor James Brainard has suggested that some of his less-outspoken counterparts may fear a backlash from conservative opinion-makers. “There is a lot of Republicans out there that think like I do. They have been intimidated, to some extent, by the Tea Party and the conservative talk show hosts,” Brainard has said.

Indeed, studies show that the news environment has become increasingly polarized around accepting or denying climate science. Avoiding explicit mention of climate change is enabling a sizable number of big-city GOP mayors to pursue policies that advance climate goals.

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Parents: Amtrak uses ‘smear campaign’

By Sam Gross, Reno Gazette-Journal

The parents of 22-year-old Aaron Salazar, an Amtrak passenger found critically injured near train tracks over two weeks ago, called Amtrak Police’s investigation a “smear campaign” by a “for-profit company,” in a statement sent Wednesday morning to the *Reno Gazette Journal*.

The statement followed a Tuesday press conference held by Amtrak Chief of Police Neil Trugman where he told reporters that Salazar’s injuries appear to be the result of an attempted suicide.

It’s an assertion that Salazar’s family fiercely disputes.

Read the whole story