

Nev. likely insulated from possible action on Roe v. Wade

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – President Trump is set to announce his nominee to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy on the U.S. Supreme Court, and the issue of women’s reproductive rights looms large over the decision.

But while talks of the high court potentially overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade case swirl in the wake of Kennedy’s retirement, political observers and legal experts say that Nevada should be insulated from any such a move.

“I think we’re in sort of a unique position for a state, really,” said Ian Bartrum, a constitutional law professor at UNLV.

Read the whole story

CHP rescues woman hit by boulder south of Tahoe

By David Caraccio, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office and CHP teamed up to rescue a 56-year-old woman struck by a large boulder while hiking at Sylvia Lake in Desolation Wilderness, south of Lake Tahoe.

The CHP helicopter rescue in the steep terrain was filmed.

Read the whole story

Alessi dragging heels to retire to get most money

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has no idea how long it will have its current city clerk because she can't make up her mind about retiring even though in June she announced she'd be leaving this month.

"We are sort of in limbo here because she has not given me or the council a date," interim City Manager Dirk Brazil told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Suzie Alessi

Alessi on June 19 stunned those in attendance at the council meeting when she said she was retiring before her term expires at the end of the year.

On July 9 she told *LTN*, "I do not have a definite date yet. Waiting to hear back from CalPERS."

Retirement is usually something someone gives a little more

thought too. Even on the public employees' retirement website it says, "You may file your service retirement application within 120 days of your planned retirement date."

People do this to ensure they don't have an interruption of taxpayer supported paychecks. Alessi could retire now, she doesn't have to wait for anything from CalPERS. She also can walk off the job without any notice to anyone.

She will make close to \$100,000 as a retiree.

Because the city has an elected city clerk there is no one to hold the person in that office accountable. There is no one to say the person ought to make a decision for the good of the city.

Brazil said he is trying to plan for whatever happens. This is so he has options at the ready for the council.

Legally, the council would have 60 days to appoint a clerk after Alessi's retirement. It is state law the city must have a clerk. There are people who fill in on an interim basis much like what Brazil is doing at the helm of the city. This is a route he advocates.

While the city manager has no oversight of the clerk, Brazil said he does believe the workload is more than one person. Alessi has an assistant. While that woman is a city employee, she reports directly to Alessi, an elected official. This further complicates matters.

Most cities don't have an elected city clerk. It would take the council putting the topic before voters to change how South Lake Tahoe handles the clerk position. This might happen this fall.

While there has not been anything on an open or closed session since Alessi's announcement indicating the council was discussing the topic of the clerk's office, it is expected to

be on the July 17 agenda. If the council chooses to take the issue to the voters, there is time to get it on this November's election.

Each of the council members was asked by *LTN*:

- *What is your feeling about having the city clerk position being elected or appointed?*
- *Do you think the public should decide whether the office should be elected or appointed?*
- *What would you look for in a future clerk?*
- *What are your feelings about the current office?*

Only Councilman Tom Davis responded. He is adamant the position should be elected, saying this gives the public better accountability. While Davis acknowledges it's not a perfect system, he believes the current set is the best for the citizenry.

**Jacks Loop Fire at 30%
containment**



Looking south from Old Clear Creek Road at Costco at 1:50pm July 9. Photo/John Simonds

Updated 9:38pm:

The James Loop Fire burning in the Carson area is at 260 acres and 30 percent containment as of 9:30pm Monday.

It was reported at 12:45pm at the James Canyon Development near Carson City. Officials reported the fire was caused by heavy equipment working on a home under construction

The fire burned 163 acres of private and 107 acres of Bureau of Indian Affairs lands, but threaten lands managed by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The fire jumped Jacks Valley Road, but fire crews were able to stop it from reaching the Jacks Valley Wildlife Management Area.

More than 20 homes were threatened, but none were lost. Jack Valley Road is open, but only James Canyon residents are allowed back in the area affected by the fire.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Environmental review beginning on Tahoe XC Lodge

On July 17, Tahoe City PUD is hosting two scoping meetings for the environmental impact report for the Tahoe Cross-Country Lodge replacement and expansion project.

They will be at 10am and 6pm in the board room at 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

The notice of preparation per CEQA was released June 22.

In 2015, the historic 1930s Rubicon Bay Schilling residence was donated to TCCSEA with the vision of becoming the Tahoe XC Lodge. The existing Tahoe XC Lodge at 925 Country Club Drive, Tahoe City is owned by Tahoe City Public Utility District and operated by Tahoe XC and the Tahoe Cross-Country Ski Education Association (TCCSEA) under a concession agreement with TCPUD.

The project involves replacing and relocating the lodge to a site off Polaris Road adjacent to the North Tahoe Middle/High School. The purpose of the project is to reconstruct a facility by re-using and re-purposing the historic Schilling Lodge in an effort to better serve year-round recreation activities and services.

Development rights in Tahoe

get overhaul

By Adam Jensen

The Lake Tahoe Basin has a unique system of private property development rights established to protect this national treasure.

The development rights system began in the 1980s and is central to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's management of growth in the Lake Tahoe Basin. It is designed to ensure development will help achieve a wide range of environmental goals.

It has also become clear the system is not well understood or easy for investors and developers to use.

Development rights, formerly known as commodities, are entitlements one must acquire before developing a property and can include commercial floor area, tourist accommodation units, existing residential units, residential development rights and allocations, land coverage, and restoration credits.

"The Lake Tahoe Regional Plan recognizes the importance of redevelopment," said Jennifer Self, a senior planner with TRPA. "Private investment in our communities is a key mechanism for getting environmental improvements on the ground. We want to make sure our systems are encouraging this type of redevelopment and not hindering progress."

Since September 2015, a dedicated group has been meeting to discuss how to better manage growth, support environmentally beneficial and economically feasible redevelopment, and improve the effectiveness and predictability of the current development rights system.

The Development Rights Strategic Initiative Working Group

includes representatives from the environmental and business sectors, state land banks, California Attorney General's Office, the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission, and the Regional Plan Implementation Committee.

The working group released recommendations in September 2017. A formal environmental review of the recommendations is anticipated this summer, with the final approval and adoption in September and October. All working group meetings and approval hearings will include opportunities for the public to comment on the proposals.

"The working group partnered with a national expert in development rights systems to look at best practices from around the country and see what we could model right here in Tahoe," Self said.

Under the recommendations, TRPA would make five key improvements that would increase flexibility and create a more user-friendly system while still maintaining the overall development cap for the basin:

- Allowing for the conversion or exchange of development rights from one type to another to allow for more flexibility and responsiveness to market demands. The system no longer has rigid silos of development types.
- Eliminating local government approval of development rights transfers across jurisdictional boundaries to simplify the system and reduce fees. A local jurisdiction would have the option to reinstate the so-called "veto" if it saw a net loss of 5 percent of existing development rights over a two-year period.
- Strengthening partnerships between TRPA and the California and Nevada land banks to increase development rights inventories. This partnership would help accelerate the goals of the Regional Plan by retiring development on sensitive lands and transferring the development rights at low cost to projects in town

centers.

- Improving the transfer-of-development-rights system to increase predictability and make the system more user-friendly. A few key improvements include eliminating a requirement to have an approved project prior to a transfer, expanding tracking and inventory capabilities on LakeTahoeInfo.org, and highlighting successful redevelopment projects.
- Allocating a portion of the residential bonus units for local achievable housing—housing for those who earn too much to qualify for affordable and moderate-income housing but too little to afford the median market-priced multi-family or single-family unit. These bonus units would be awarded essentially free of charge to eligible projects.

“All in all, we’ve heard from community groups that we’re moving in the right direction,” Self said.

For more information on development rights and public meetings, go **online**.

Adam Jensen is an environmental education specialist for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in the summer 2018 issue of Tahoe In Depth.

Reasons why the U.S. is vulnerable to big disasters

By Morten Wendelbo, The Conversation

During the 2017 disaster season, three severe hurricanes devastated large parts of the U.S.

The quick succession of major disasters made it obvious that such large-scale emergencies can be a strain, even in one of the world's richest countries.

As a complex emergency researcher, I investigate why some countries can better withstand and respond to disasters. The factors are many and diverse, but three major ones stand out because they are within the grasp of the federal and local governments: where and how cities grow; how easily households can access critical services during disaster; and the reliability of the supply chains for critical goods.

For all three of these factors, the U.S. is heading in the wrong direction. In many ways, Americans are becoming more vulnerable by the day.

Where Americans live

Large shares of the U.S. population live in the parts of the country most vulnerable to major disasters, mainly coastal areas prone to hurricane damage. Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Harvey and Irma all hit heavily populated coasts.

Seven of the 10 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. are on or near the coast, accounting for more than 60 million people. In fact, the vast majority of counties with more than 500,000 inhabitants are concentrated on the coast.

More than 5 million Americans also live on islands like Puerto Rico and Hawaii, where a hurricane, volcanic eruption or tsunami can be devastating.

California has been spared landfall of a major tropical cyclone, but torrential rainfall still causes severe damage along the coast. On top of this, most of California's coastal cities are adjacent to the San Andreas Fault, which caused the death of around 3,000 people in 1906. Geologists agree that another large earthquake is bound to occur.

Large concentrations of people pose problems, too. To support large populations in small spaces, cities need advanced large-scale infrastructure – not only to house people, but to deliver utilities like electricity and gas, as well as to tame water with dams, levies and spillways.

While such infrastructure is impressive, its occasional failure can have grave consequences. In several of the most severe American disasters, infrastructure collapse caused substantial damage. In New Orleans, the Lower Ninth Ward was violently flooded when levies collapsed. In the 1906 San Francisco earthquake disaster, gas mains ruptured, fueling a deadly fire that tore through the city for days.

The large cities on the coasts are consistently growing larger. The 10 largest metropolitan areas on the coast alone have grown by almost 5 million people since 2010, an increase of nearly 7 percent.

Experts project that by 2040, these 10 metropolitan areas will add a whopping 16.7 million more people, making the total population around 92.5 million people – most of whom will be particularly vulnerable to disaster.

Access to emergency funds

In a disaster, people often need money to cover medical care, food, water and other crucial needs. In a frustrating catch-22, however, access to funds can be severely limited if power outages take out ATMs and credit card terminals. That was the case in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

A 2015 Federal Reserve survey found that even with access to bank accounts and ATMs, almost half of Americans would be unable to find \$400 for an emergency without borrowing or using a credit card.

Today, there's almost three times the amount of U.S. currency in circulation as there was in 1997. But a large share of

dollar bills are actually used abroad. U.S. dollars are the legal or de facto currency in many countries, as well as a preferred currency for savings around the world. Consequently, the amount of cash in circulation that is actually available to make transactions in disasters is relatively low.

The problem with access to cash to cover emergency expenses is especially acute for minority Americans. The same Federal Reserve survey showed that even for Americans with the same income, blacks and Hispanics are far less likely to have access to the \$400 emergency funds than whites.

Blacks and Hispanics are also more likely to be poor than whites non-Hispanics, and poor families are far more susceptible to disasters.

Worse still, the proportion of minorities in metropolitan areas are often far above the national average, compounding the vulnerability of minorities. In fact, in all but one of the 10 largest metropolitan areas on the coast, the minority population is growing faster than the white non-Hispanic population.

Supply chains

Even if Americans do have the funds necessary to pay for critical goods, those goods may not be available during a disaster.

Without access to pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and fuels, many people would die. Many of these critical goods are exclusively produced overseas; in fact, the 30 most critical pharmaceuticals, such as insulin for Type 1 diabetes and heparin for blood thinning, are all produced in whole or in part abroad. Sometimes the goods are produced in a single geographic area or even by a single facility.

That makes the supply of these critical goods very vulnerable to natural disasters or other emergencies. If a global

pandemic affects China or India as well as the U.S., there would be almost no way to source the critical goods necessary to save Americans infected by the disease.

At the same time that production of many critical goods are moving abroad, stockpiles and storage are exceptionally low for most goods. Goods often arrive at the consumer continuously, just in time for when they are needed. The rapidly growing international transportation industry can deliver quickly and reliably, leaving little reason for hospitals to spend on substantial storage of most goods.

Some U.S. hospitals receive critical pharmaceuticals as often as three times per day. On a regular day, it's possible for an efficient system to keep emergency rooms stocked, but during a disaster – when workers are absent, transportation is slowed and production abroad is potentially knocked out – Americans are left incredibly vulnerable. There's little margin for error, and that margin shrinks apace with the expansion of “just-in-time” systems.

Morten Wendelbo is a research fellow and policy sciences lecturer, Texas A&M University.

Nevada releases school safety report

By Meghan Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt released a wide-ranging set of recommendations on school safety, but there's no clear idea of what the measures may cost or who would foot the bill.

The report stems from a school safety summit Laxalt held in March with education and safety officials after a Feb. 14 shooting at a school in Parkland, Fla., reignited the national conversation on school safety nationwide. During that summit, he stressed prioritizing the physical safety and “hardening” of schools to make it more difficult for an assailant to enter campus.

The seven major themes of the report including increasing police presence, adding new safety features, improving communication between schools and law enforcement officials and enacting “red flag” laws to evaluate potential threats with a nexus to mental illness or domestic violence.

Read the whole story

Calif. allows aerial SuperTanker to re-join fire fight

By Kellen Browning, Sacramento Bee

As wildfires rage across California, beleaguered fire officials are calling for reinforcements. After a lengthy delay, a modified 747 airplane is expected to be deployed this weekend to assist with the fight.

The Global SuperTanker, a Boeing 747 airframe modified for firefighting, received approval from Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service on Friday night to begin dropping water, retardant and suppressant on wildfires, according to Global SuperTanker Services CEO Jim Wheeler. The plane, named the

Spirit of John Muir, can fly up to 600 miles per hour and deliver up to eight drops totaling 19,200 gallons in a single flight.

Read the whole story

Driver rolls vehicle on Hwy. 50, severely hurt

A Sacramento man was seriously injured Saturday when his vehicle ran off the road just east of Horsetail falls along Highway 50.

The 38-year-old, whose identity has been withheld for unknown reasons, was airlifted to Renown Medical Center in Reno after the July 7, 5:30am single-car crash.

According to the California Highway Patrol the man was driving "at an unsafe speed." The rate of speed was not revealed. He went around a corner, lost control, then the right righter hit guard rail before the vehicle rolled over embankment.

The driver was ejected, landing on the rock embankment. The vehicle landed on its wheels, with the left front wheel on the driver's right hand.

In order to haul the vehicle out the tow truck was seen off the steep embankment just after 9am Saturday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report