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NASW • NEVADA CHAPTER

National Association of Social Workers

Thursday, March 20, 2003

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Good afternoon Chairman Parks and members of the Assembly Taxation committee. For the record, my name is Mark Nichols, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers - Nevada Chapter. I am speaking to you as a True Blue Nevadan in absolute support of raising taxes responsibly in Nevada.

NASW's number one legislative priority the session is to support a comprehensive reform of Nevada's tax system. We believe that it is fundamentally flawed and in need of significant reform. It is our position that there are three critical weaknesses, which must all be addressed. First, we generate inadequate revenue to support our state's education and human service needs. Second, our tax structure is unfairly regressive - taxing poor people at a significantly higher rate than our super-rich residents. And, third, our tax system is extremely unstable and we must diversify our revenue sources.

True Blue Nevadans are you tired of living in a state that is at the bottom of nearly every quality-of-life social indicator list. We are 49th in suicide. Social workers know that Nevada under-funds our programs for Alcohol and Other Drugs and mental health services, two of the contributing factors in many suicide. Five of the states with the highest per capita expenditures on these program areas have the lowest suicide rates.

NASW-Nevada members are tired of not having the programs and services necessary to address their needs and those of the people or client's we serve.

True Blue Nevadans are concerned for the future of Nevada's students if the only thing they get from the state is more budget cuts.

We fear what will happen to all Nevadans, especially the vulnerable and those in need, if Nevada has to cut an additional \$700 million of services. NASW plead with you not cave into the wealth and power of the state that place their financial wealth ahead of the children in the child welfare system.

We believe that for every dollar of waste found in government and school spending that there are at least ten dollars of unmet need?

NASW-Nevada is tired of businesses and wealthy Nevadans refusing to pay their fair share.

True Blue Nevadans are fed-up with Nevada balancing its undersized budget on the backs of our children, seniors, working poor and vulnerable populations? Budget battles are referred to everyone trying to get their fair piece of the pie. Nevada does not have a pie - we have a cookie and were fighting over the crumbs.

Nevada deserves better. I understand the political pressure you are all under. No new taxes, don't tax me, taxes will hurt small business, cut/cut/cut. They all translate to one thing - greed. True Blue Nevadans are wearing our blue ribbons to show you, our elected leaders, that we support raising taxes responsibly in Nevada. True Blue Nevadans care about Nevada's needs - today's and tomorrow's.

In closing, I commit to you my continued strong support in your effort to find fairness in Nevada's tax system. I urged you to pass a comprehensive, broad-based tax reform package for all Nevadan.

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

DATE: 3/20/03 ROOM: LV EXHIBIT N

SUBMITTED BY: Mark Nichols