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**DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING & REHABILITATION
JOINT BUDGET HEARING**

JANUARY 27, 2003

**STATEMENT BY MYLA C. FLORENCE,
DIRECTOR**

Mr. Chairman, members of the joint committees, for the record, my name is Myla Florence, Director of the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. I am pleased to appear before you today to present the Department's Budget Overview.

Before I get into the overview I'd like to present the Department's executive team and go over some of our accomplishments and challenges during the interim.

As you know the economy began to decline in March 2001. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 fully tested our unemployment insurance compensation and employment services systems. Prior to September 11th, we experienced the following weekly averages:

New Claims – 2,756
Continued Claims – 23,309
Calls to Call Centers – 7,500
Trust Fund Payouts - \$4.7m

The weeks following September 11th, calls and claims skyrocketed. Our high water mark was experienced in February with over 42,000 claims and \$9.3 million dollars in benefits issued.

Without the support of the Governor and investments in information technology, our system would have been paralyzed. Governor Guinn authorized the hiring of intermittent staff and other staff throughout the Department assisted where possible. We expanded call center hours and provided on-site assistance at the Culinary Union and Las Vegas Convention Center. I am very proud of our employees who were committed to being responsive to unemployed Nevadans. While I did receive complaints about telephone wait times, I was told at the same time about how empathetic and courteous our staff performed.

During this period we had two extensions of benefits. Congress passed the first extension March 2002 and we were paying benefits within a week of the authorizing legislation. On January 8, 2003 the second extension was passed and benefits were immediately processed.

EXHIBIT D Senate Committee on Finance

Date: 1-27-2003 Page 1 of 2

The investments in information technology paid off. Throughout the year every facet of the department has been touched by technology projects and services. Businesses can utilize an electronic funds transfer system to pay unemployment insurance taxes. Unemployed Nevadans can file initial and continued claims via the telephone or the Internet. Our web site is on the most highly visited sites in state government and is updated daily.

Finally, before I get into the budget overview book we've prepared for you, I want to mention our latest achievement. In November 2002, the Department received the Trailblazer Award for Performance Excellence from the Nevada Quality Alliance. The award is based upon the Malcolm Baldrige standards and demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement, accountability and exemplary customer service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I know my time is short so I'd like to proceed to the overview of the Department's 2004-2005 budget.