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Nevada Division of State Parks
Position Statement
Oppose - Senate Bill 282

Senate Bill 282 would not be good for the vast majority of citizens of the State of Nevada or for the recreating public that visit state parks. The majority of park users that visit state parks are law-abiding citizens that do not participate in behavior that violates current law. The State currently has sufficient statutes to provide for addressing either public intoxication or disturbing the peace of other visitors in the state parks.

The primary problem for the Division of State Parks is a function of limited staff capability during peak use periods to enforce current laws. The Division has limited commissioned staff in state parks. For example, in the case of Lahontan Reservoir, law enforcement is augmented with county sheriff's deputies for assistance only on Memorial Day weekend. There is no funding requested in the Governor's recommended budget to provide for increased staff or contracts for enforcement.

By excluding alcohol in state parks, we will impact casual use of alcohol by park users that are not creating a problem. We have alcohol consumed during different special events and activities that are not creating problems; we allow sale of alcohol at several concessions including the Shakespeare Festival at Lake Tahoe and at the Las Vegas Gun Club.

Alcohol is a problem with underage drinkers, with Lahontan Reservoir being our most critical area for violations. Lahontan currently has four commissioned officers. This allows for only superficial enforcement on the busy holiday weekends. We also contract with Lyon County for assistance on Memorial Day at a cost of \$2,500. Most violations during these periods are for minor consumption and disturbing the peace, both of which have adequate statutes to cover infractions. The minors that possess alcohol smuggle it into the park now. SB 282 would not change this, but would only amplify the charges once we are called to respond to complaints. This bill would impact all users, not just those who create problems.

The possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages within existing laws is considered by most visitors as a legitimate use of a state park as part of the leisure experience. Most users possess and consume sensible amounts of alcohol when they visit. Although no surveys have been completed, it is a reasonable estimate that 60+% of our users arrive at a park with alcoholic beverages in their vehicle or trailer. Our performance indicators show one arrest for every 97,000 users, and one citation for every 12,000 users. Also, it should be noted that the state park rangers perform a wide range of functions in all areas of park and resource management besides law enforcement duties.

Many park visitors arrive at the various parks in their recreational vehicles or motor homes while on vacation; of those, many arrive with the intent of staying for more than one day, and as such, bring food and beverages with them (including alcoholic

beverages). SB 282 would require such visitors to either dispose of their otherwise legal alcoholic beverages before entering the property or be guilty of a misdemeanor, if such possession could be verified by a search of their motor home/recreational vehicle, which is a huge problem.

The bill could also have an impact on revenues to the state by deterring law bidding citizens from visiting the parks. It could also financially impact local businesses that sell alcoholic beverages to park visitors. In the long run, visitation could drop in the parks as users go to other properties that allow alcoholic beverage possession and consumption. If we have a drop in visitors, we will have a reduction in fees collected. This would have a long-term impact on state parks' revenue generating abilities. It must be remembered that Nevada has a tourism-based economy and a state park alcohol ban would either keep some visitors from entering our state parks or force them to smuggle it in.

In the short term, the Division would have to modify contracts with concessionaires. It would also have to obtain revenue sources to cover the additional cost of increased staff to enforce the new law and/or increased contracting with local sheriff for assistance. As previously stated, we currently only contract with Lyon County; under SB 282, we would need to consider contracts statewide with other law enforcement agencies. Also, some of the state parks do not have commissioned staff; therefore, it could not be easily enforced in these areas.

It is safe to assume that the existing state laws and statutes are adequate to monitor and control current violations. If this bill becomes law, the Division will not be able to enforce it without additional staff or support from other law enforcement agencies including Nevada Highway Patrol to monitor and provide increased enforcement.

Our recommendation is for the bill to be indefinitely postponed.