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Andrew Strain

California Ski Industry
Association

Incline Village
Crystal Bay Chamber
of Commerce

Incline Village
Crystal Bay Visitor &
Convention Bureau

Lake Tahoe Gaming
Alliance

Lake Tahoe Visitors
Authority

North Lake Tahoe
Resort Association

South Lake Tahoe
Chamber of Commerce

Stateline
Redevelopment
Partnerships

Tahoe-Douglas
Chamber of Commerce

Tahoe-Sierra
Preservation Council

The League to Save
Lake Tahoe

Testimony - Senate Bill 216
Senate Legislative Affairs & Operations
April 1, 2003
submitted by Steve Teshara, Co-Chair

Mr. Chairman and Members, my name is Steve Teshara, Executive Director of the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, and a Co-Chair of the Lake Tahoe Transportation & Water Quality Coalition. The Coalition is comprised of Tahoe's major private sector and non governmental stakeholders, including the gaming, skiing, and tourism industries, chambers of commerce, and our local environmental, and private property rights organizations. The Coalition has been active on Tahoe land use, planning, project implementation, and legislative issues for more than 14 years.

Over the years, we have worked closely with members of the Nevada Legislature on a wide variety of Tahoe issues. In particular, we have worked with legislators assigned each interim to what's been commonly referred to as the "Tahoe Oversight Committee." Approved by the Legislature, and in place every interim except one since 1985, this Committee has worked extremely well - providing a direct link between the Legislature, its many Tahoe constituents, and its significant investment in the Bi-State Compact, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and, more recently, the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program.

As distinguished member of last interim's "Tahoe Oversight Committee;" a member whose district includes Lake Tahoe, we appreciate Senator Amodeli's recognition of the importance of the Tahoe Oversight Committee and its functions. We appreciate his stated commitment to support the continuation of this role. However, we do have concerns that the Legislature's "Tahoe Oversight" may be diminished in the context of SB-216, since the bill would expand the Committee's oversight jurisdiction to include such other interstate water bodies as the Colorado River and Lake Mead. We foresee that issues involving the Colorado River Commission of Nevada and the Southern Nevada Water Authority may easily consume the limited number of Committee meetings that can be scheduled and funded. These are matters of growing importance to the State. However, Tahoe issues and considerations have easily taken up the allotment of four meetings each interim, including educational field trips to see on the ground environmental issues, needs and improvements.

We're also extremely concerned about the provisions in SB-216, Section 7.1., subsections b and c, which allow the Committee Chair to cause the deposition of witnesses as in the manner prescribed for civil actions in district court, and to issue subpoenas to compel testimony and the production of books, papers, and documents. Testimony and information requested by the "Tahoe Oversight Committee" has always been freely provided. This "asked and freely provided" atmosphere is much more conducive to the type of partnership that has been created between the Legislature and Lake Tahoe, through the work of the Tahoe Oversight Committee. This is not to say that hard questions can't be asked and tough issues tackled, but these things can be, and have been for many years, accomplished in something other than a "court of law" type setting.

I want to point out that the members of the 2001/2002 Tahoe Oversight Committee - the Committee to Continue Review of the Programs and Activities in the Lake Tahoe Basin - voted unanimously to support continuation of the Committee for 2003-2204 - it was BDR R-175. This proposal would have maintained the Committee's Tahoe focus.

Perhaps we don't understand some of the larger issues that may be at play in the context of SB-216. But we ask you, the Committee, to consider how best we can maintain the proper focus and support for on-going, direct Legislative Oversight at Lake Tahoe, given Nevada's significant investment and partnership in protecting and enhancing this national treasure, without having the necessary focus on Tahoe be swallowed by issues which are not likely directly connected.

Good government often means streamlining and combining functions to achieve efficiencies. However, we believe a Tahoe-specific committee may be considered a limited exception that will result in benefits for the people and the resources of Nevada.

Thank you for your consideration of our view and concerns regarding SB-216.