

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Seventy-sixth Session
March 21, 2011**

The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair John J. Lee at 9:07 a.m. on Monday, March 21, 2011, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 5100, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator John J. Lee, Chair
Senator Mark A. Manendo, Vice Chair
Senator Michael A. Schneider
Senator Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy
Senator James A. Settelmeyer

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Crescent Hardy, Assembly District No. 20

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Stewart, Policy Analyst
Heidi Chlarson, Counsel
Martha Barnes, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Manny Gomez
Tim Farkas
Kyle Davis, Nevada Conservation League and Education Fund
Luke Busby, Clean Energy Center LLC
Judy Stokey, Executive, Government and External Affairs, Government and Community Strategy, NV Energy
Renny Ashleman, City of Henderson
John J. Slaughter, Government Affairs Coordinator, Washoe County

Senate Committee on Government Affairs
March 21, 2011
Page 2

Justin McAffee, President, Capitol Club, College of Southern Nevada
Aimee Riley, Vice President, Capitol Club, College of Southern Nevada
John Creedon, Student Body President, College of Southern Nevada
Michelle Millman, College of Southern Nevada
LeLiana DeLeon, College of Southern Nevada
Richard Plackowski, College of Southern Nevada
Abriana Foster, College of Southern Nevada
Natalie Higgins, College of Southern Nevada
Jessica Lytle, College of Southern Nevada
Branden French, College of Southern Nevada
Noemi B. Filoteo, College of Southern Nevada
Shara Hinden, Student Government Representative, College of Southern Nevada

CHAIR LEE:

We will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 260.

SENATE BILL 260: Provides an alternative procedure for the creation of certain local improvement districts. (BDR 21-126)

SENATOR JOSEPH (JOE) P. HARDY (Clark County Senatorial District No. 12):
Senate Bill 260 originated with many people including former Senator Stan R. Olsen. There were discussions with Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury and her nephew, Joseph Woodbury, a senior at Boulder City High School, regarding the same legislation. Mr. Woodbury summarized the bill effectively when he said, "Nevada has a huge potential for a renewable energy market; in fact, our State should be a renewable energy capital of the United States." If we utilize this potential, jobs, revenue and a larger State economy will be created. The greatest inhibitor of this success is the inability of most residents to put up capital for such renewable energy projects.

Senate Bill 260 will allow residents to aggregate funds for the creation of renewable energy projects and overcome the issue of them being unaffordable. Due to the increased number of investors, S.B. 260 allows for larger renewable energy projects, and they will subsequently be more energy-efficient and cost-effective. The bill allows for a local improvement district focused on renewable energy to allow people to pool their resources and share capital in order to gain efficiency.

ASSEMBLYMAN CRESENT HARDY (Assembly District No. 20):

The young man who initiated this bill is hard-working and has lots of initiative; Joseph Woodbury is one of those impressive individuals who works extremely hard in high school. We believe this legislation is viable and productive.

CHAIR LEE:

Does the bill pertain to the Mesquite area or outlying areas?

SENATOR HARDY:

This is not limited to any one place in the State. We have unique resources in Nevada because sunlight is a source of energy and wind is a source of energy. This bill will allow people to group together voluntarily to become more efficient in the delivery of renewable energy. We have made an investment and have a desire to grow our energy production and become more independent. We would also like to enjoy the process of creating jobs.

CHAIR LEE:

I would like to hear from our testifiers in Las Vegas.

MANNY GOMEZ:

I am a civil engineer and have had a keen interest in the subject of renewable energy for a number of years. In the 2009 Session, we worked on this issue and missed a few of the finer points. I am glad we are putting the finishing touches on the language now. Our initial vision for this issue was not residential but the potential for economic development and diversification in Nevada because of our access to renewable energy. You may have heard about the Property-Assessed Clean Energy program with the acronym PACE used in association with this work; PACE is a residential solar program that exists in Berkeley, California.

However, our version of renewable energy would be used primarily in commercial and industrial projects. This is a means to bring new industries into our State by offering them the opportunity to utilize public financing to establish renewable energy resources. It would also be beneficial to add energy efficiency so whenever we discuss renewable energy projects, we will be discussing energy efficiency projects. Nevada has a history of using public financing for traditional infrastructure, water, sewer and wastewater improvements. Our vision was simply to add renewable energy and energy efficiency projects available for public financing to the existing list. I am pleased to see the number

of people who recognize the potential of S.B. 260 to help Nevada become more diversified. Nevada could become an exporter of energy. It is an achievable goal and the direction we should be taking.

CHAIR LEE:

Is that how you see this bill? I am reading S.B. 260 as a local government or municipality rather than someone asking for local government's assistance.

SENATOR HARDY:

The bill has two parts, and I focused my testimony on the local improvement district. Section 2, subsection 1 states, "... to construct or improve a renewable energy project, issue bonds or otherwise finance the cost of the renewable energy project and levy assessments on assessable property"

TIM FARKAS:

Senate Bill 260 is really a housekeeping bill as the original intent was passed in 2009. What passed in 2009 has some problems, and the language in S.B. 260 will make the program workable for commercial and industrial projects. The bill would also enable a residential program when equity is established and a lien can be attached. At this time, a residential program would be difficult due to the economy.

There are 13 references to "renewable energy project" in S.B. 260; we would like that language to be amended to say "energy efficiency or renewable energy project." Energy efficiency is more cost-effective and has an immediate ability to create jobs. I am an energy finance consultant and help obtain funding for energy efficiency projects, and these projects create green jobs immediately. Improvements can be associated with indoor air quality, utility savings, the environment and the benefits derived from these types of projects.

CHAIR LEE:

I am trying to understand the bill because it seems to be going in two different directions.

KYLE DAVIS (Nevada Conservation League and Education Fund):

We are in support of the bill. We understand the bill makes changes in the law that will allow for the new form of financing. When we discuss installing renewable energy projects and include energy efficiency projects, the barrier will be the up-front capital, even if it will pencil-out over the long term. The

language in the bill provides another financing option allowing the projects to be implemented. We would enjoy the benefits of energy being on the grid, reducing greenhouse gases, creating jobs and improving the economy. It is a good bill because of the financing option, and it will open up additional options as the economy improves and housing prices recover.

LUKE BUSBY (Clean Energy Center LLC):

Clean Energy Center is a small, renewable energy developer located in Reno that also participates in some utility-scale projects. We support the bill and believe it solves one of the most difficult problems for distributive generation providers by allowing all the costs for renewable energy projects to be up front. The smaller projects make more sense economically than the larger utility-scale projects, but you have to pay for the projects all at once, which creates great difficulty for most consumers and businesses. We also support amending the bill to include energy efficiency because the cheapest kilowatt is the one you never have to produce. These measures all add value to property, and efficiency will benefit everyone.

CHAIR LEE:

A municipality can carve out an improvement district by ordinance and by the assessed value of the land. It allows those people to work together to begin a renewable energy project. If the project goes defunct, the city or municipality is not responsible for the deficiencies.

MR. BUSBY:

My understanding is the bill takes advantage of the bonding power of local governments to generate revenue to lend to consumers and businesses so they can build these projects. The projects are paid for through the property assessments. When property owners agree to a project, it binds them, the successors and interests of the property to pay back the value of the project. There is a much lower risk because the cost is attached to a taxing mechanism, and the interest rates are lower through the bonding process than they would be if the consumer borrowed the money from a bank.

SENATOR SETTELMAYER:

Since we are dealing with a government entity—a general improvement district—I would like to ask legal if this gives the entity the power to use eminent domain for renewable energy?

MR. FARKAS:

Mr. Busby's description of the financing portion of the bill is accurate; however, a city or local government is not required to provide any security to obtain financing for a local improvement district or special improvement district. This can and often does happen when it serves a clear municipal purpose.

Relative to S.B. 260, this will be individual properties creating a noncontiguous energy improvement district, so it does not affect that property's neighbor in any way. It does not require the municipality to put up any additional security other than the lien on the property. While the bill does not restrict the municipality from providing security like a general obligation bond, it also does not require it. We do not think any municipality will entertain the idea of providing security. We are prepared to utilize this resource without additional security from municipalities.

MR. GOMEZ:

I want to clarify my previous statements. Returning to our initial vision, I mentioned the PACE program which is primarily a residential program. We tried to create statutory authority to use in a residential, commercial or industrial setting. We are not at odds with the residential program. This could be used in any setting—commercial, industrial, redevelopment or residential.

JUDY STOKEY (Executive, Government and External Affairs, Government and Community Strategy, NV Energy):

I am testifying in opposition to S.B. 260 as written and would like to work with the sponsors to address our concerns. We believe the current language does not just identify or discuss financing of the projects, which is a great thing for the local governments, but we have many questions about who will own or maintain the facilities. In our net metering rules, a local government can build a facility on its property and service that building. This can be done now, and NV Energy will assist with rebates. We had our largest year ever in providing rebates to local governments last year. We do not support building a facility and transporting the power over the distribution lines to serve other customers. That would mean the local government would be a utility company and should fall under the same rules and guidelines as NV Energy under the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada.

CHAIR LEE:

Could Renny Ashleman please come to the table? Because you represent local government, how do you see this bill?

RENNY ASHLEMAN (City of Henderson):

From the viewpoint of the City of Henderson, both the proponents and Ms. Stokey are correct. There needs to be additional technical work done on the bill itself. Senate Bill 260 interfaces with many bills being heard this Session regarding assistance by the power company and by the ratepayers for energy production. The bill needs very careful scrutiny from that viewpoint.

CHAIR LEE:

I want to make sure local government is being included in discussions regarding these issues. I will close the hearing on S.B. 260 and request Senator Hardy to work on the language; we will bring it back during a work session. We will open the hearing on Senate Bill 261.

SENATE BILL 261: Makes various changes relating to the reorganization of certain fire protection districts. (BDR 42-836)

SENATOR JOSEPH (JOE) P. HARDY (Clark County Senatorial District No. 12):

Senate Bill 261 is being brought forward at the request of the Moapa Valley Fire Protection District that was created in 1965. The Fire Protection District functions under the purview of the Clark County Commissioners and the offices of the Clark County Fire Department. The bill proposes more locality in the decision-making process, specifically for training and budgeting to allow for equipment and facility repairs. This will allow transparency and accountability regarding how funding has been utilized over the past 11 years.

There has been approximately \$7 million for this process utilized from collection of the Consolidated Tax. The bill would allow the Clark County Commissioners to plan a reorganization of the Fire Protection District so the board members will have input regarding their needs. Inasmuch as this is a local volunteer fire department, the volunteers would like to improve their training and complete needed repairs on their equipment. With more local control, the volunteers feel they could complete equipment repairs more quickly. If the Clark County Commissioners choose to reorganize the District, S.B. 261 provides the instructions to accomplish it. If the County Commissioners choose not to

reorganize the district, it allows the people to vote once they understand the issue.

ASSEMBLYMAN CRESENT HARDY:

I support this bill. The best efficiencies, governance and fiscal responsibility should be closest to the people. The people have the best understanding of where they are headed within the district and how to accomplish their tasks.

CHAIR LEE:

You would have to notify the county commissioners if you want to initiate a reorganization? Would the county commissioners appoint people to the fire district as liaisons to meet and report back to the county commissioners? Does Phase 2 of the bill indicate if a reorganization is not initiated, you want elected officials to participate on the board?

SENATOR HARDY:

Correct. The most important issue is to recognize the county commissioners have a budget they designate for a certain entity, such as the Moapa Valley Fire District. The distribution for budget funding must be understood. The county commissioners will be involved no matter what is done because they are the recipient of funds from the Consolidated Tax Distribution collected by the Department of Taxation. I do not see the county commissioners ever being divested of their fiscal responsibilities because they receive this funding.

CHAIR LEE:

You mentioned the challenges these smaller fire departments have regarding funding for maintenance. How does S.B. 261 get the county commissioners to pay more attention to these local districts?

SENATOR HARDY:

It does not change the people as much as it changes the process. As Assemblyman Hardy mentioned, it allows the people who see the problem to do something about it. It can shorten the length of the problem. For instance, when the garage door does not open at the Moapa Valley Volunteer Fire Department and volunteers have to back the truck out of the building, it creates a problem with their response time. The volunteers know the funding and their budgetary needs and would be able to allocate resources much sooner than the Clark County Commissioners.

CHAIR LEE:

This bill will allow for greater control of the budget process so the volunteers could make repairs more quickly.

SENATOR HARDY:

That is correct. There is home rule, and the closer you are to the problem, the sooner you get it fixed.

CHAIR LEE:

Assemblyman Hardy, would you ultimately rather have the second portion of the bill that allows for the elected board? If the county commissioners choose not to reorganize and you elect a board, it will come back to the Legislature.

ASSEMBLYMAN HARDY:

We need the language to be drafted simply for the individuals operating the fire station in that District to understand how they receive money for their budget. Clark County distributes the money now, but it is not always spent in the most efficient way.

CHAIR LEE:

Moapa Valley is just one instance of a small town. Many of these smaller communities want to have a say in the decisions affecting their towns. Would the individuals rather support a board of elected officials or people appointed by the county commissioners?

ASSEMBLYMAN HARDY:

These are two different issues that need to be addressed separately. If the response is to incorporate, a particular process will be implemented and the responsibility will be based on the actions of the Legislature. Incorporation will not move forward quickly within Moapa Valley. The examples brought forward during my testimony are issues that need to be addressed today.

JOHN J. SLAUGHTER (Government Affairs Coordinator, Washoe County):

My position on this bill is friendly opposed, friendly in favor. I spoke with Senator Hardy and appreciate his willingness to work with us to address some of our concerns. Washoe County has been working for a number of years on consolidation and regionalization of fire services. For the past 11 years, there has been an interlocal agreement between the City of Reno and the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District. The City of Reno provides complete

fire protection services for a large portion of unincorporated areas within Washoe County. We have also been involved with various studies on regionalization and recently completed a regional Fire Services Master Plan and Standards of Cover to determine the locations of crews and stations. We are looking at emergency medical services and fire service, with several options available to us currently under review. Our concern with S.B. 261 as written is that it would limit some of these options.

We approached Senator Hardy about a friendly conceptual amendment that would take Washoe County out of the bill in order for us to continue with the studies currently being conducted. Some of the issues addressed by Senator Hardy have already been addressed in our interlocal agreements, joint training, maintenance of equipment and staffing.

CHAIR LEE:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 261. We have a presentation regarding funding for the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and possible solutions involving state and local governments. These are students and faculty from CSN who are concerned about the funding for their institution. We noticed CSN is being funded at subsistence level. There is one counselor for every 2,000 students, and we want to make this inequity known to the Board of Regents and the Governor. We know there is an effect within our community when people cannot get the education needed to qualify for available jobs.

As a funding comparison, Great Basin College in Elko receives \$10,468 per student; Western Nevada College in Carson City receives \$9,000 per student; Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno receives \$6,460 per student; and CSN in North Las Vegas receives \$5,057 per student. The Board of Regents understands the discrepancy and wants to address it, but the Governor has not made changes to the *Executive Budget* for the colleges and universities. We are not requesting new tax dollars but a formula adjustment in order for all students to be treated equally.

In Nevada, we have something called the Nevada Plan for Kindergarten through Grade 12; if you are in a smaller school with 100 students or you are in a large school with 3,500 students in Clark County, you receive the same education.

JUSTIN MCAFFEE (President, Capitol Club, College of Southern Nevada):

The Capitol Club is a political nonpartisan group on the CSN campus. We strive to make students aware of the issues and get them involved regardless of political persuasions. We are aware of the funding inequity for CSN, and there are some important facts we want to bring to your attention. The CSN has a special mission to reach people of various backgrounds and experience levels. We have many students who are getting a second chance by attending CSN. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates in the Country. The CSN is the second opportunity for those who struggled and dropped out of high school, had a job parking cars at one of the casinos and then decided to go back to school.

There are several campuses across Las Vegas Valley to accomplish this mission of reaching out to more people and helping them improve their lives: the Cheyenne Campus, the Charleston Campus and the Henderson Campus. The campuses are a long way apart. The purpose is accessibility. We want to make it available for students to go to school without having to drive all the way across town. Gas is almost \$4 a gallon, so affordability affects people of low-income levels and different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. This is such an important mission for Las Vegas Valley to support students by providing new opportunities.

I share this because we have different campuses, but it all costs more money. We are underfunded, but we actually have more expenses in order to accomplish the mission of accessibility. We have nine extension campuses for the same reason. If we want to continue to provide this opportunity for students of various backgrounds, we need to keep CSN adequately funded. Retaining these students at the college requires funding to help them receive financial aid, tutoring or whatever it may be to keep them going to school.

As Senator Lee mentioned, we have a small number of services available because of budget cuts, and CSN is underfunded compared to other schools. We are asking for your support to obtain the funding needed to operate CSN.

AIMEE RILEY (Vice President, Capitol Club, College of Southern Nevada):

I look at this funding inequality as an issue of class warfare. We have a diverse community at CSN. We have the largest student community in the State, and we are the least funded of all of the colleges—by half in some instances. This is not right. These are the people who need the most money and the most help in

order to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. We should be providing more opportunities for these individuals, not less. I ask you to support Senator Lee's bill, S.B. 374 because this is very important to the forward movement of our economy. This is a way to put these unemployed people back to work by providing them more skills and an opportunity to diversify the economy because they will be part of a more educated workforce. This will be a forward movement for the State of Nevada and for the College of Southern Nevada in general.

SENATE BILL 374: Temporarily redirects a portion of the taxes ad valorem levied in Clark County to support the College of Southern Nevada. (BDR S-992)

JOHN CREEDON (Student Body President, College of Southern Nevada):

This is an important issue to me because CSN is the access point for the system of higher education, especially in Las Vegas Valley. We serve nontraditional students, students who may not have completed high school but went back and completed their General Educational Development. The people who lost their jobs in construction and the gaming industry when the economy tanked are looking for new skills and trying to reenter and contribute to the workforce. That is the demographic that CSN serves. If we are not open and available to them, we are not serving the community. People are not getting the skills needed to reenter the workforce. Right now, we are not able to do that.

At CSN, we have to improvise with how we scale back our budgets. Trash cans are overflowing because we do not have enough facility crews to maintain them. That does not really affect education, but we also do not have enough resources to employ professors and offer enough classes to accommodate all the students who want to attend CSN.

For example, last semester 5,300 students were turned away from core classes like biology. These are basic classes needed in order to graduate with a degree. Being the access institution, it is a problem when we turn away 5,300 students, and that is prior to the new budget cuts. If we can correct the funding inequity, that would go a long way toward addressing this problem.

Regarding the people being turned away, 56 percent of the 5,300 unable to get into classes were minority students from underserved communities, and 58 percent were first-generation students. These are people unable to get into core classes. We are holding them back by not offering the resources needed to

get them to graduation with a degree. We have one advisor for every 2,000 students.

There are concerns about wanting to see more students graduate, but there are two major problems with the graduation rates. We measured graduation rates at the community college for three years. Students must complete the degree in three years in order to count toward the graduation metric. The vast majority of students at CSN are nontraditional students. The students are working people, parents and older people from the community. The average CSN student is 28 years old. These students cannot attend school full time because they cannot maintain full workloads. They are unlikely to complete their degree within three years. We are not able to provide the student services needed because we do not have the resources to offer enough faculty. We are unable to help them achieve a degree.

I tried to speak with the counselors and advisors and ended up figuring it out by myself. You have the opportunity to meet with a counselor on a first-come, first-served basis, but you can only get in and out. They do not have the time to engage you or lead you in the right direction by determining if you are taking unnecessary classes or taking the same classes repeatedly. If you are not taking the classes needed to graduate, or if you retake classes because you got into a class you did not need, it costs the students and the State money. If we had advisors assisting these students, we would be able to get them through the system faster, more effectively and more economically.

We are looking at some serious budget cuts, but this has been an issue for a long period of time. The Board of Regents acknowledged the issue about three years ago. Long before the budget cuts escalated, the Regents voted to correct the funding inequity incrementally over a course of several years. The Board of Regents took it back when the 35 percent cuts were imposed in 2009.

The funding formula is disproportionately favored to every other institution in the State. The major universities get a great deal more private funding, more grants and more donations than CSN. We are the access institution that has to be low cost, available and accessible to those people who are not able to go elsewhere. The system is backwards. The institution needing the most State funds has the least.

SENATOR MANENDO:

I attended CSN a couple of decades ago, and it seems like we are in the same situation as when I attended the school. We conducted a letter-writing campaign to the Legislature when we were trying to fund a building. The building was at the CSN Cheyenne Campus. At the time, the Henderson and Charleston Campuses did not exist. We fought and fought and called and nagged the elected officials. We got pushed aside.

There is not only disparity with CSN but even with the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). I take exception to it. If we cannot fund all of the institutions adequately, then we need to look at the largest population to serve the highest number of students. That is not harsh but a reality as to the economic times we are facing. Right now, the funding is most needed at CSN. We are all concerned about your future and our future in the State of Nevada. It is imperative that we be successful.

I sit on another committee that hears from potential businesses that would like to relocate to Nevada. The No. 1 issue is Nevada's workforce. They ask us to tell them what type of training and skills our workforce can offer. The list is not as long as it should be.

The foundation at CSN needs to do more. I have not heard from the foundation in over a decade and a half. It has not reached out to me as an alumni or as a member of the Legislature. I hear from UNLV all the time regarding what it is doing and how it is raising money. Is the foundation at CSN there only in spirit? It needs to be more visible in the community. I know what UNLV does, and it seems to be extremely organized. The foundation should be active on campus in order to have cooperation with the public-private sector. I am so glad to see you here advocating for yourselves and the future of Nevada.

MICHELLE MILLMAN (College of Southern Nevada):

When we were young, our teachers, parents and politicians convinced us that when we grew up we could do anything. We could become doctors, lawyers or even senators. The importance of school was emphasized with the promise that an education would give us the opportunity for upward mobility in our supposedly equal society. We were told that our free capitalist culture was superior to any other in the world because by working hard, we would be rewarded with at least some level of economic stability.

By denying us our right to an education, you are condemning us to lie to our children. When we were young, neither our parents, teachers nor our politicians told us when we grew up we would all be janitors, on welfare or convicts. What do you tell your children? What am I supposed to tell mine? People are not born criminals or made into them. To quote the author Chuck Palahniuk, "The people you're trying to step on, we're everyone you depend on." We connect your calls, we cook your meals, we guard you while you sleep. Remember who you are supposed to represent.

LELIANA DELEON (College of Southern Nevada):

Budget cuts cannot happen. Education is our foundation, it is your foundation and it is what made you who you are today. The CSN is known for its open doors, no matter your age or your ethnicity. We are there for you. Last semester, we had to turn away 5,300 students.

My little brother is going to graduate soon, and he wants to attend CSN and then transfer to a big university as I am doing. He may not be able to because of budget cuts and too few teachers to provide the fundamentals necessary to grow as a person. The window to our future is education; what if it was your children? Think about it, you probably want the best for your children just like I want the best for my children. I do have a 2-year-old daughter. If I am unable to obtain the best education possible, why should I stay in Nevada? I want to think Nevada is my home. Nevada is where I have grown. Even though I was born on the East Coast, I have grown in Nevada. I am Nevada. I am your future doctor, so if you cut my education, I will not be able to heal you in the future. I cannot be the one to help you be a better person in a healthy society. Please do not cut education. I am you. You are me.

RICHARD PLACKOWSKI (College of Southern Nevada):

I am representing CSN and every student in Nevada. We have a serious problem with education in this Country, but I will stick to education in Nevada. Here in Nevada, we have one of the worst—if not the worst—education systems according to the polls and tests. The only State that may have worse statistics than Nevada would be Mississippi. If Mississippi is better than Nevada in any way, something is wrong. I have nothing against Mississippi.

Today, I would like to address that CSN has the largest population of all campuses within Nevada. We also have the least funding, which says we are being treated less than our fellow students, less than our fellow neighbors and

our fellow Nevadans. We are the same as other students. We do nothing less than they do. It is only because we attend CSN that we are treated less than anybody else. We are not less intelligent, we do not have less skills, we do not have less abilities, and no statistics prove that any of us will be any less successful. Therefore, we are entitled to the same amount of funding and representation by our Countrymen, our Legislators and the people who sign off the checks to our college. We must be treated as equals.

The U.S. Declaration of Independence states "all men are created equal." If students are men and considered to be that, then we should be treated so. I would like to leave you with food for thought. As far as Nevada goes, we have the worst education; with these budget cuts, the stigma of education in Nevada will become worse. We are not less intelligent here. By cutting education, you fail to promote education within society. It is ingrained in us to be more prosperous, to pursue a job rather than working at PetSmart or parking cars at the casinos.

Students are looking for more prosperous jobs by furthering their education. If you cut education, people are going to turn elsewhere. They will not turn toward education in Nevada, they will go out of state for more prosperous opportunities, so you are cutting possible future revenue. If you cut the funds currently set aside for CSN and close down the campus in Henderson, what do you think will happen? You will make the other campuses more crowded, more uncomfortable, more strenuous and eventually, you will push them away. You will be pushing away money that would be given to the State and education for the future job force within the State.

MS. DELEON:

Aside from CSN, my little brother is in high school, and he does not have the tools to succeed. They are short on books, short on teachers, and they are overcrowded. I know of six teachers who are looking to move to other universities. You do not want that. We want to keep the teachers we have and grow with them.

ABRIANA FOSTER (College of Southern Nevada):

I am a student at CSN and also attended UNLV. I am an education major, which is really important for this cause. I can shed more light on how CSN is impacted and how our future is as well. I am planning to be a secondary education teacher, which means I will be teaching in high school or middle school. The

scary part about that is I visited many classrooms as part of my observations, and I am seeing a domino effect. I will be teaching the students that will attend CSN, UNR and UNLV. I hear people willing to place blame, but no one is really willing to fix the problem. It is not the people but the system. If you cannot identify the things that are wrong in the system and find creative solutions, all the talk and protesting means nothing. We know there is a shortfall with books and a shortage of teachers, yet we are spending time placing blame instead of fixing the problem. That really concerns me, especially when the projection was the budget turnaround would be 2012. I am not seeing any change. It seems like our economy is getting worse and the unemployment rate is rising. What do we do?

NATALIE HIGGINS (College of Southern Nevada):

I moved from Phoenix, Arizona, to Las Vegas to start a better life. I escaped a highly abusive relationship, and when I moved here, I was heartbroken and homeless. Through the Safe Nest for Women shelter in Las Vegas, I was able to get on my feet, find a job and pursue college. That was the most amazing moment of my life, and it absolutely transformed me. Education has been my saving grace and without it, I would have nothing to strive for. At this point in time, I am pursuing a nursing degree at CSN, and I am a straight-A student. I also work full time because I do not qualify for grants or student loans. I have been trying really hard to keep my chin up with all of these budget cuts. I am sure many of you have enjoyed the fruits of a Nevada education; I hope you will extend that to my generation and to your children's generation. Keep education a priority. I do not understand how someone can look at this from a business viewpoint and see true investment potential without an educated workforce. It is absolutely not feasible.

I am not here to demonize you and certainly do not envy the task before you. There is a reason I did not pursue political science as my major. I respect you because you have the power to change our present course. Stick to your core values as a parent, a human being and as a Nevadan. This State evolved out of strong work ethics. I would love to settle down and raise a family here and perpetuate a long Nevada tradition of hard work. Strive for what you believe in and attain your dreams: that is the opportunity I saw when I moved here with absolutely nothing. I hope you keep that in the back of your mind when you are voting on this issue. The idea of family values is not linear to cutting education and the future for Nevada's children.

JESSICA LYTLE (College of Southern Nevada):

I am a nursing major at CSN. I was a straight-A student taking honors classes in high school; however, due to family situations, my sister and I were forced to drop out of high school and get jobs to support the family. I had always planned to go to college, that was my dream. I was the smart one of the family who was going to take care of everybody. I ended up working at Starbucks. It was very sad for me even though I love their coffee. After the economy plummeted, I was laid off. I had nothing because I am an uneducated worker. I applied for hundreds of positions but had no education to fall back on, and there was nothing left for me to do. I enrolled at CSN because their tuition costs allowed me to attend school. I am entering the nursing program this spring. I am going to get my education and be a successful member of society so I can help people. I am the first member of my family even to go to college. The CSN has allowed me the opportunity. Without them, I would still be an uneducated worker living with my sister.

BRANDEN FRENCH (College of Southern Nevada):

I am a father of three attending CSN and working toward an anthropology degree. You have already been told CSN is the entry point for those of us trying to get another life. The median age is 28—not 18 but 28. The last time I lost hope, back when I was still reading the newspaper, we had a declared unemployment rate of 12 percent. In actuality, it was about 17 percent. These are people who are trying to afford a life; they are trying to get their homes back; they are trying to provide a better life for their children.

This Nation was founded on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We are supposed to have the one system in the world where you can start with nothing and get somewhere. Did you know the anthropological and psychological literature shows a direct correlation between poverty and mental illness; between poverty and domestic abuse; between poverty and criminality? The true form of upward mobility is education. It is not mining revenue, it is not gaming revenue, it is not party rhetoric, it is education.

You are telling these 5,300 people rejected by CSN they cannot get core classes to achieve upward mobility. When you tell us there will be a 76 percent increase in our tuition, that is not feasible. What you are telling us is the American dream has become the great American recession nightmare—no upward mobility. You have the institution that is not funded by any of these private sectors. You have the institution that is not going with all these

wonderful 300-year sports programs. We are a community college. We are people who have already entered life and found we have reached an impasse and need a way out. You are cutting our lifeline when you say we are going to raise your tuition by 76 percent. We are going to shut down one of your campuses. The disparity is class warfare. If I could afford \$100,000 in tuition, I would not be having this problem now, would I? If I was not trying to support my children on a minimum wage job, I would not be in this situation, would I?

Some of us who do not qualify for financial aid are taking food out of our children's mouths to try to better our lives. We need something. Where is the American dream? Where is the upward mobility? We have forgotten life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness along the way. All over this Nation, we are taking away collective bargaining.

I am a native Nevadan, and I have watched education fall. First, you took away music in elementary schools; then you took away art programs. We are one of the few states that does not have a separate district for special education. You are taking mentally handicapped children, children with mental illnesses, and placing them in the same room with every other child. The teacher ratio is one teacher for every 30 students. That is how they start. Now that we are adults and can see the world around us, we are being rejected from core classes. We are being told we cannot afford an education; without that education, we cannot afford the better life. We actually need to look with solution-oriented thought. We cannot answer this problem with party rhetoric. We cannot forestall the problem. We cannot just hope the economy is going to recover. You say you want to bring in new companies from around the Nation to Nevada. It has already been stated, if we have an uneducated workforce, why would they bring their companies to Nevada? How can we remain Nevadans and achieve this upward mobility if we cannot get the jobs that are already here? We need to be solution-oriented and return to our core values. We need to remember the people at CSN are hurt the most by these budget cuts. These people are also the ones who need the most help.

NOEMI B. FILOTEO (College of Southern Nevada):

I represent the minority of immigrant people. I came to Las Vegas many years ago. It was at CSN that I could take my first English as a Second Language class. I want you to know how these classes impacted my family and my community. Thanks to those classes, I could help people who were in worse circumstances than I was. I used to help them go to the hospital, school and

even court. I raised a large family, and today I am a grandmother. I have a great opportunity to go back to school. Because of the price increase, classes are sometimes unreachable and not without sacrifices. My community is being stigmatized, thinking we do not want to assimilate the culture and learn the language; but sometimes, it is because we do not have the opportunity. If it were not for CSN being accessible, I would not have learned English.

I am returning to learn English properly. I want to read and to write. I want to be an American. I am a naturalized American today, and I want to communicate properly. I also want to be an example for my children and my grandchildren. Will the children in families like mine have access to a basic education? I am begging you to choose what is right. I know you are parents. When things are not going well at home, the last thing we think about is to stop sending our children to school. Maybe we can cut somewhere else, but we would never stop sending our children to school.

SHARA HINDEN (Student Government Representative, College of Southern Nevada):

I want to stress the importance of accessibility and the effect of giving a fair amount of funding to CSN and its student services. I am a product of the Clark County School District, and I am also a nontraditional student. I did not go to college until two years after I graduated because I did not know what I wanted to do with my life. All I knew was that I wanted to move up in the world instead of stagnating. I am grateful for the services provided to me at CSN. If I had not had those counselors and financial aid consultants to help me along the way, it is likely I would have given up. I am also attending UNLV at this time; when looking at their counseling departments, there is a night and day difference. At UNLV, you get an appointment and can typically spend an hour with the advisor. They are there to help me by giving me direction and the affirmation that I am taking the right path. They advise me on what I need to do to succeed. I can only imagine how great our graduation rate would be if we would have the same funding at CSN.

CHAIR LEE:

Every one of you in this committee room is speaking a language that needs to be heard. You are here because you not only care about yourselves but your students, your parents and your children. The CSN has a great President in Mike Richards. He is in a tough situation because he had to support the whole

system, knowing the disparity that has taken place and trying to do all he can to help you.

My mother is a graduate of CSN. The first CSN campus was located on Main Street below Bonanza where the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* used to be located. My mother graduated 35 years later at the age of 75. I think my mother is the longest active student who attended school continuously at CSN. She had a great time there.

You need to be registered voters. That is how you get represented here to gain support. You will probably replace us one day.

You have two reasons for being here today. One is for the general well-being of the whole education system in Nevada. The second reason is, what about us? You need to be taken care of at CSN so you have an opportunity to survive in this market and in the economy. While we review the big picture, we want to ensure we make education equal. The CSN needs to be equal with the other institutions.

Would it be beneficial to have local elected officials such as city council members sit on a CSN board? We may need to get more information in order to have them be more responsive to your needs at the local government level. The funding discrepancy between the schools and what is being done to CSN is ripe for a discrimination lawsuit. It is totally blatant how your funding is insufficient.

The Board of Regents approached ex-Governor Jim Gibbons, and he said no to the request. The Board of Regents approached Governor Brian Sandoval who had to say no because of the economic situation. The time to say no is over. We need to make you equal in the funding process today. While we fight for education, we need to continue to fight for the rights of the people at CSN. We have some property tax with 2 cents of that property tax unaccounted for that is to go into higher education in the county of origin.

My goal is to see all the money that is supposed to go into Clark County and into the University system go specifically into the CSN program. We would be talking about \$21,807,000 in 2012 that I will fight to distribute to CSN. In 2013, the amount would be \$21,931,000. With that \$22 million, we could get the college up to speed and then get the funding formula fixed. If I can only

Senate Committee on Government Affairs
March 21, 2011
Page 22

get \$9 million or \$10 million to get started, I will take it because we have to fix the funding formula.

There are compassionate members on this Committee, and they heard everything you had to say this morning. Senator Schneider is a graduate of UNLV, and Senator Manendo is a graduate of CSN and UNLV. You have not spoken to deaf ears today. The meeting is adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Martha Barnes,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator John J. Lee, Chair

DATE: _____

<u>EXHIBITS</u>			
Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster