

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

**Seventy-Ninth Session  
March 9, 2017**

The Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chairwoman Olivia Diaz at 1:44 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2017, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at [www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz, Chairwoman  
Assemblyman Nelson Araujo, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson  
Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod  
Assemblyman Skip Daly  
Assemblyman John Hambrick  
Assemblyman Ira Hansen  
Assemblyman Richard McArthur  
Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno  
Assemblyman James Ohrenschall  
Assemblyman James Oscarson

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Jason Frierson, Assembly District No. 8

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst  
Kevin Powers, Committee Counsel  
Kailey Taylor, Committee Secretary  
Melissa Loomis, Committee Assistant



**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Barry Gold, Director, Government Relations, AARP Nevada  
Jon Sasser, representing Washoe Legal Services; Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada; and Southern Nevada Senior Law Program  
Janette Dean, Private Citizen, Caledonia, Minnesota  
Melanie Meehan Crossley, Private Citizen, Genoa, Nevada  
John Ridgeway, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Janine Hansen, State President, Nevada Families for Freedom  
John Wagner, representing the Independent American Party

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

[Committee rules and protocols were explained.] We will now go to our first order of business, which is to hear Assembly Joint Resolution 7. Let me remind those in attendance that I will use the sign-in sheets to monitor the pace of the testimony, and I intend to give time for as many people as possible to provide those insights. Please keep your comments brief and to the point. If someone has already said what you plan to say, we always welcome a "ditto" or "me too." You can also select a single speaker to represent several of you. It is my pleasure to welcome the sponsor of this measure, Speaker Frierson.

**Assembly Joint Resolution 7: Expresses the opposition of the Nevada Legislature to certain proposed changes to the federal Medicare and Social Security programs. (BDR R-699)**

**Assemblyman Jason Frierson, Assembly District No. 8:**

Assembly Joint Resolution 7, in essence, expresses the opposition of our legislature to propose changes to the federal Medicare and social security programs. We are obviously in a unique time where Nevadans are extremely dependent on the existence of these programs to provide services for hundreds of thousands of citizens. We hear talk in Washington, D.C., about the scaling back of those programs, which would put our citizens at risk. We are at a point where this is a bipartisan issue and concern. This is not political. We need to provide a social safety net for our citizenry. This is an effort to echo the sentiments that have come out of this body and the executive body about maintaining those programs. The resolution is actually straightforward. I will go through an overview and some of the bullet points. Then I will invite some folks who are here to offer insights. Normally, I would stay until the end to answer questions, but this is straightforward, so I will leave it to their testimony. I am willing to follow up with members of the Committee who may have any questions or concerns.

Assembly Joint Resolution 7 expresses opposition to six things. First it expresses opposition to raising the age of eligibility to receive Medicare benefits from 65 years old to 67 years of age. Second, it expresses opposition to repealing certain improvements that were made to Medicare by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Third, it proposes to express opposition to raising the age for full retirement from 67 to 69 years old for social security beneficiaries. Fourth, the resolution proposes to express opposition to the revision of the

Social Security Act to move towards a cost of living adjustment based on the chained consumer price index. Fifth, it proposes to express opposition to "means testing" benefits for certain social security benefits. Lastly, it proposes to express opposition to the potential privatization of many of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance benefits that older Nevadans have earned during decades of work.

Going through some of these issues, raising the age from 65 years to 67 years would have damaging consequences. In an analysis conducted by AARP, it was determined that this change would increase other health care spending, especially the cost for employer health plans and Medicaid. Uninsured people would pay full cost for a longer time. Medicare premiums would rise due to fewer people in the program to share the cost. We are essentially making a decision that will cost us more, both in the short and long term.

The other issue is the potential voucher system and the misconception surrounding it. Making changes to the existing Medicare payout structure to propose the creation of a voucher system to pay for health care costs would also be detrimental to the future of the system. Again, according to AARP, the value of the voucher would be tied to some economic index, not to the actual health costs. The index rises much faster than other costs, which is part of the detrimental value. Due to the high risk of the benefits becoming increasingly inadequate, there will be more out-of-pocket costs that will be shifted to the consumer. The privatization of Medicare and social security will also have a significant negative impact to hundreds of thousands of Nevadans who receive these benefits.

According to the United States Social Security Administration, at the end of 2015 in Nevada, we had 492,121 social security beneficiaries. Of those, almost 364,000 were age 65 and older. As of March 2016, Medicare beneficiaries in Nevada totaled 453,032. Nevadans depend on the benefits they receive from social security, and any loss to that income has a substantial impact on their livelihood. Total monthly social security benefits for all Nevada beneficiaries equal \$613,347,000. According to the United States Social Security Administration, Nevada retirees receive about an average of \$1,251 per month from social security. For many of these Nevadans, social security is their sole source of income. The population in Nevada is greatly impacted by any changes to social security and that is evidenced by some other statistics as well. Social security makes up 50 percent or more of the income of 59 percent of Nevada residents who fall within that age bracket (over 65 years of age). One in three Nevadans relies on social security as their only source of income. In Nevada, 42 percent of the state's 65-and-older population would have incomes far below the poverty line if they did not receive social security. The Social Security Administration states that 1 in 6 Nevada residents receives social security. It is a significant portion. Not only in this country, but in Nevada in particular, we have an aging population who paid into a program and lived productive lives, but now are limited in their ability to seek outside income and are dependent on this program.

There is another concern about the privatization of Medicare and social security and whether or not that is a fiscally responsible path to take. According to Bloomberg, privatizing social security would dramatically increase the national debt. Transitioning to private

accounts while continuing to provide current social security benefits would leave multitrillion-dollar holes that would need to be filled by more government spending. It is simply something that we have invested in for decades and it would be detrimental to pull out abruptly, not only to Nevada, but also to the whole country. I think that we can all agree that the Medicare and social security programs have been, and continue to be, vital for our aging population. I hope this Committee and the Legislature as a whole would join me in urging our United States Congress to consider the hardworking Nevadans who have paid their dues and contributed throughout their lives when addressing any changes to these programs from the federal level down to the states.

Often we have statutory changes we have to go through and discuss legislative intent, but with an assembly joint resolution, it is the legislative intent as expressed in the resolution itself. I welcome questions to the extent I am able to answer them. Mr. Sasser has information to consider as well. My intentions are in the resolution, and I hope that you will all consider supporting it.

**Assemblyman Hansen:**

This is an interesting bill. I actually have my great-grandfather's social security card dated December 10, 1936. The program is obviously a very old program, but there have been some changes through the years. The most dramatic and worst one, in my opinion, was in 1965 with Lyndon B. Johnson, where they started taking the trust fund monies and putting them into the General Fund. One of the big concerns with this has been that all of these people paid all this money in, but then the federal government was taking money out of the trust fund and putting in its place "IOUs" that were then considered assets by the government. While I am fully in support of the idea of being fiscally responsible, we have 50 to 60 years' worth of problems to try to come up with a solution for. What should we do with that? When my great-grandfather was first involved in that, the ratio was thirty workers to every one recipient. Now it is down to 3 to 1. Back then, the average life expectancy was less than 70 years for a male, now it is pushing 80 years or so. All of those factored in, it seems as though there is some room to make adjustments in order to try to keep the system solvent. Where does the federal government come in as far as its fiscal irresponsibility in using those trust fund monies for general fund purposes?

**Assemblyman Frierson:**

I will say two things. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. We have provided for our great-grandparents and our grandparents. We have to be mindful that we pay anyway. If they do not have this income, we pay for emergency room visits. We are not going to be a state with our seniors, of all populations, on the streets without support. We will pay one way or the other. My response to you regarding the federal government is you might consider running for Congress. I am sure you have some great ideas. I cannot control what they do as far as how they fix it. I think yanking the rug out from under someone who has already earned to be supported after age 65 to 67 is asking too much. Raising the age of full retirement to the age of 69 is asking too much. We do have to look at some problems in Washington, D.C., right now. My concern is that if they do that without thinking about the problems, we are doing a disservice to our seniors. I do not think I am a baby boomer, but

I do not think I am Generation X either. For those of us approaching retirement age, I think that at some point we will have to make some adjustments.

**Assemblyman Hansen:**

It is great to say that we need to solve these problems, but we also need to come up with some realistic projections—such as where we will raise the money; what responsibilities does the federal government have for the misuse of the funds; and other fiduciary aspects we need to cover.

**Assemblyman Frierson:**

I would hope that in your support of the resolution, you would put that in your floor statement to urge Congress to come up with some solutions.

**Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Thank you for bringing this resolution. You gave some startling statistics, and I did not get a chance to write them all down. Could you tell me what the percentage was of people who live with social security as their sole source of income?

**Assemblyman Frierson:**

Social security makes up 50 percent or more of the income for 59 percent of Nevada residents who are 65 years of age or older. One in three Nevadans rely entirely on social security as their only source of income. Along the same lines, 42 percent of our 65 and older population would fall below the poverty line without social security income.

**Assemblyman Ohrenschall:**

I am not sure if you have this data, or maybe the AARP representative will have that, but our senior population is growing and people are living longer. Given that, I think this resolution is more important than ever. I wondered if they would have some data as to what are the demographics of Nevada going to look like in the next 10 to 20 years, because I imagine that our senior population is going to grow exponentially.

**Assemblyman Frierson:**

I do not have that. I would certainly welcome Barry Gold and Jon Sasser, when the time is appropriate, to present the information that they have. I will answer any questions that you have of me before they do so.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Are there any other questions or comments? [There were none.] I will now invite Mr. Sasser and Mr. Gold to come testify in support of A.J.R. 7.

**Barry Gold, Director, Government Relations, AARP Nevada:**

I am so glad that the speaker chose to use the AARP Social Security: 2014 Nevada Quick Facts sheet that we talked to him about earlier. Now I do not have to repeat.

I would like to talk about Medicare first, while it is currently under attack in Congress. I am going to read an excerpt from a letter from Jo Anne Jenkins, CEO of AARP, which was printed on March 7, 2016, in the *Pike County Courier* and *The Chronicle*. It says:

AARP has a long history of fighting for affordable health care and against attempts to cut Medicare. We have long opposed attempts to force older Americans to pay more for their health care. As the Medicaid debate heats up in Congress, AARP will vigorously protect and defend health care coverage that Medicare beneficiaries receive. Let me be clear, AARP will flatly oppose any attempts to cut, scale back, or diminish Medicare's benefits. This includes any efforts to eliminate the guaranteed level of coverage that has been part of Medicare from the start.

That is an important fact: the guaranteed coverage that Medicare affords. The letter goes on to say:

The importance of Medicare to aging Americans is indisputable. Today, 57 million Americans rely on Medicare to help pay for their prescription drugs, doctor visits, and hospitalizations. Workers have earned these benefits by paying into the program throughout their lives. Medicare is the bedrock of health security for all Americans as they age. It keeps all older people out of poverty and enables them to live with independence and dignity. Current beneficiaries need to know that the coverage they count on every day will not be reduced or taken away. Those nearing eligibility must know that the promise of guaranteed benefits will be kept. While fighting to protect and defend Medicare for current and near-term beneficiaries, we must also improve it for future generations while continuing its guaranteed benefits.

Older adults already currently pay between 15 and 18 percent of costs out of pocket for their health care, which is disproportionate, even with Medicare.

I would like to talk about social security now because AARP and I spent a considerable amount of time last year talking to more than 100 Republicans and Democrats, some on this Committee, many more in the Legislature, city council members, county commissioners, mayors, and business leaders across the state. They all agreed that social security was important, and their constituents needed it. I talked to people about that and about AARP's commitment to preserve social security benefits for current retirees and future retirees. These benefits are earned and paid into by Nevadans. Assemblyman Frierson already mentioned that 1 in 6 receives this benefit and for 1 in 3 over the age of 65, it is their only income.

It may be easy for some people to say that since people are living longer, we should raise the age of eligibility for Medicare and social security. That sounds reasonable, right? Well, that depends on who you are; where you come from; and what you do for a living. If you come from communities of diversity, you do not always experience the luxury of a longer life span

that other people do. The other thing to consider is what you do for a living. If you are waiting to retire and have to wait to get social security or Medicare until you are 67 or 69 years old, and you are a roofer, carpenter, or you do hard labor, your body will not last that long. That becomes an issue depending on what is your job; who you are; where you come from; and what is your background. Those are all issues regarding raising the age of eligibility just because some people live longer. That debate needs to be had. Those were things that AARP really wanted to discuss when we went around and talked to people.

Privatization is not an option. Privatization would not guarantee the benefits for Medicare. Privatization, vouchers, or premium support—there are a lot of buzzwords they talk about for Medicare. The problem with that is that they give you money to buy a health insurance policy. You do not know what those guaranteed benefits may or may not be and may have no idea how much your health insurance will cost. You may not be able to buy it. If the cost goes up next year, will you get enough money to buy that same health care coverage? Privatization, vouchers, or Medicare premium support are very unacceptable to AARP as well as the privatization of social security. You can talk about what happened to the money in the lock box and ask if there ever was a lock box—well, the money in social security is in U.S. Treasury Bonds, which are considered one of the safest investments in the world and respected by many people.

I think there are many things to consider about privatization. I know it was talked about a lot earlier. A few years ago, I believe President Bush was talking about privatization, and then we had the "Great Recession." Imagine if they privatized social security and people had invested their money privately in the market. Where would they be today? They would have nothing. I would like to say that what happened in the Great Recession is a lot of money went to money heaven. There were many people who planned for retirement, saved money, had social security, and then were wiped out by the recession. Privatization is a problem, and it will not work. On behalf of the 330,000 AARP members, AARP strongly supports A.J.R. 7 and urges this Committee to pass it and tell Congress to make sure our retirees, our near retirees, and retirees of the future will have the health care and financial security that they deserve and have earned.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Please submit all of the data from which you just cited.

**Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:**

You were citing the numbers of membership. Is that in Nevada alone?

**Barry Gold:**

Yes, in Nevada alone, AARP has over 330,000 members across the state. It amounts to about 36 or 37 percent of the 50-and-older population in Nevada. If you look at the 65-and-older population, that number goes up. We have more members over the age of 65. Unfortunately, when some people turn age 50 and they get that first letter saying that it is time to think about AARP, they decide they are not ready. As they get older and start thinking about some other things, they start to think that this could be a good thing.

**Jon Sasser, representing Washoe Legal Services; Legal Aid Center Southern Nevada; and Southern Nevada Senior Law Program:**

I am the legislative chair for the Nevada Commission on Services for People With Disabilities. When you think of social security and Medicare as being programs for seniors only, we should also remember Medicare is the medical coverage for the disabled folks who have worked long enough in their lives and paid enough into the system that they qualify for Medicare. There is a two-year waiting period after they become disabled before they can gain that coverage. For lower-income folks that do not work enough, we look to Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for their incomes and their medical coverage. I suspect that Assemblyman Frierson said something to me about testifying because I may be the only lobbyist he knew who is over the age of 65 and draws both Medicare and social security, so I am uniquely qualified to talk about these problems.

Mr. Gold does great work. He had a workshop several years ago where he went all around the state and looked at every possible answer to saving Social Security and what each would cost. It comes down to a question of raising the income or cutting benefits. I support the position that AARP takes that those who have put into the system, at this point in time, should not have their benefits cut; but if we need more in the system, we should look at the income side as well as the payout side.

I also want to comment on the interaction between the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which as you know is being looked at by Congress, and Medicare. You think of the Affordable Care Act as mostly about Medicaid and private insurance and subsidies, but there is some interaction as well. It does a couple of different things in Medicare. It requires that Medicare pay for well visits, so people do not have to wait until they get sick, but they can get annual checkups and recommendations for lifestyle changes they might need to stay healthy. That part of the ACA affects Medicare. Another is the so called "donut hole." That is something that is left over from Medicare Part D where you pay up to a certain annual amount for prescription drugs and you have almost full coverage. Then comes the donut hole, where for the next number of thousands of dollars per year, you have no coverage. After that, you have a catastrophic program that kicks in and pays from that point forward. By 2020, the ACA would have completely filled that donut hole and has moved towards phasing out the payments that people had to make out of pocket. Because of some of the savings in the ACA, it has been estimated that Medicare has added another 12 years to its life in terms of its solvency based on the savings in the ACA. We do not know what Congress is going to do; there are so many proposals floating around, but I do think it is important to pass this resolution, to express our concern, and to stand up for those who depend on these programs in the state.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Mr. Gold, you said you represented 330,000 members; I wanted to know if you have any information about how your membership feels about their social security and Medicare benefits. Do they want to see changes to their income check on a monthly basis? Do they want to see changes to their Medicare coverage? Do they want it replaced? What are you hearing from your membership?



**Barry Gold:**

We have done extensive work in reaching out to our members with surveys and polls. Some of these are state-specific and some are national-specific. We had a program a few years ago where we went across the country and held town hall meetings to talk to our members. We told them they have earned and paid for these benefits and asked what they want to see changed. Universally, they said that they did not want to see benefits cut. One of the things they talked about is looking at increasing the benefit for some lower-income people. There were about 8 to 12 proposals that could make your head swim because of how technical some of them were. However, some were simple things they talked about such as raising the income cap because you only pay social security on about \$122,000 of your income, I believe. They do not want to change the benefits because they have paid into them and earned them.

Last year we had another program called Take A Stand. We asked people running for office, especially presidential candidates, to take a stand and explain what they are going to do to preserve and protect the guaranteed benefits for social security. It was very successful. We were able to gather hundreds of volunteers all across the state. I do not have the exact number, but we had many volunteers who made phone calls out in the community and talked to people. Everyone told them that social security is important, and it did not matter what age they were; they wanted to see it continued. When we talked to the twenty year-olds, we found this myth and fallacy that it would not be there for them. The problem is—it has to be there for them because people are not able to save and do not save money. There needs to be something to take care of them later in life. Social security was the promise that the government made to people. We need to make sure those guaranteed benefits are there.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

I do not see any further questions for you. At this time, I will take testimony in support for those in Carson City.

**Janette Dean, Private Citizen, Caledonia, Minnesota:**

I am a former resident of Nevada, currently in Minnesota. I am a University of Nevada, Reno alumna, and I studied political science and sociology. I plan to return to Nevada next year after helping my mother. She is elderly as well, and she does count on her social security benefits to help her in her golden years. I would like to point out that I am in full support of Assemblyman Frierson's A.J.R. 7. Nevada should send a signal to show Congress that we want social security to remain undiminished. If anything, it should be expanded.

I would like to point out that one of the reasons I most believe that people did not save through the years is that based on a lot of evidence of researchers and economists, wages, including the minimum wage, did not keep up with productivity gains. If social security had not been a promise, I think you would have seen many more rallies and demands for higher wages that were kept so artificially low compared to history. In a sense, social security was a tradeoff for that. To try to pull the carpet from under people now is shameful. I not only support A.J.R. 7, I support expansion of the benefits and keeping the age as it is, so people

can enjoy the golden years that they have earned. Entitlement is a word that should be considered earned and deserved. I echo the comments of our AARP representative and Jon Sasser. Please protect social security and please work on better wages that would better reflect the productivity gains. Again, you can look at research from Richard Wolff and distinguished professor Robert Reich, who was the United States Labor Secretary under Bill Clinton.

**Melanie Meehan Crossley, Private Citizen, Genoa, Nevada:**

I wanted to put a brief focus on this idea of raising the retirement age from 67 years to 69 years. I was born in 1941. I reached the age of 65 in November of the appropriate year, and I was the last group to retire fully at the age of 65. Thereafter, another month was added, and another month, until we arrived at where we are today. Here in Nevada, I think it is especially critical because many of the people in Nevada work in jobs that are hard on the body. Think about the people who are servers in our tourism industry. That is hard work. Imagine trying to do that until the age of 67 or 69. You will shift that population to drawing disability early because they cannot reach that retirement age.

The second point I want to make has to do with Medicare. My parents were covered by Medicare; I, too, am covered by Medicare now that I am retired. One of the things that is not thought about too much is that my parents, having that benefit preserved my assets so that I could support my retirement. If they did not have Medicare, I, like many of you, would have had to deplete other resources to cover health care costs for parents. You may not have enough of your own working years to rebuild your assets for the day you need to retire. My father died of cancer. My mother worked well into her eighties, then she had heart and lung issues, and she was hospitalized for three months before she passed away. You can imagine those expenses should there not have been these benefits. I would like you to support this resolution and send that message to Congress.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Is there anyone else in northern Nevada who would like to testify in support? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas in support?

**John Ridgeway, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

Assembly Anderson is my representative. I want to thank him for doing a terrific job. Many people talked about their grandfather and great-grandfather in regards to social security. I will as well. My grandfather was born in 1898, and I was born in 1953. He did not pull social security until the 1960s when he was old enough. In the *U.S. Constitution*, in the preamble, it says we want to take care of our welfare and blessings of liberty and our posterity. That gives a definition to the next generation. That is right there in the *United States Constitution*. We need to maintain social security without all of the economic problems it has had. We need to secure it for our posterity.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

I will now take testimony in opposition in Carson City.

**Janine Hansen, State President, Nevada Families for Freedom:**

I am not really here to oppose this. I have the same types of concerns that have been expressed in this Committee. My grandmother was 94 years old when she passed away, and my mother was 95 years old when she passed away. I am a grandma right now, so I have considerable concerns. I wanted to talk about my concerns regarding a few of the economic realities, which have been mentioned here earlier.

We often hear that the federal deficit is twenty trillion dollars. However, this does not include the unfunded liabilities of social security, Medicare, Medicaid, or federal pensions. A search on the Internet may provide many alternatives in the trillions of dollars for the total of unfunded liabilities. Two studies, one from Mercatus Center at George Mason University and another from Professor Laurence Kotlikoff of Boston University, place the unfunded liability debt at an astounding \$220 trillion. Social security consumes 24 percent of the federal budget. Medicare and Medicaid consume another 24 percent of the budget. Defense spending is at 18 percent. Debt Interest consumes 7 percent, but as the Federal Reserve is raising interest rates, it could certainly go up. That could be devastating on our debt. Safety net programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Unemployment Insurance consume 11 percent. What we see is that there is very little nondiscretionary money in the federal budget because most of it is covering things like social security, Medicare, Medicaid, and federal pensions.

The reason I am concerned about this is because—say instead of \$220 trillion in unfunded liabilities, another figure was \$84 trillion. If we just increased income taxes to be able to pay for that, it would be an 81 percent increase in federal income taxes, which would be very devastating to all of us. I think we need to be aware of what the real facts are considering our economy. I heard U.S. Treasuries are what we have in the Social Security Trust Fund, which also concerns me because when the Federal Reserve issues those, right now they are put out for sale. Over the last many years, many nations have bought those, but now they are not very happy with the United States. They do not trust us. In the last few years, China has unloaded trillions of U.S. Treasuries. Many other countries, particularly the BRICS nations including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa who have their own economic organization, have begun using currency other than the U.S. dollar and have been dumping trillions in U.S. Treasuries. My concern is that when we face the economic realities, although we want to ensure that people who have paid into the system receive social security, the economic realities are that may not be possible. If that comes, it will be without having looked at alternatives or other options. It will be devastating to our state and to the nation. We need to recognize that the unfunded liability now is an astounding \$220 trillion, which is simply not possible to repay.

**John Wagner, representing the Independent American Party:**

I oppose this resolution because I do not think it is necessary at this time. We do not know what Congress is going to do and here we are, reacting to them saying that they might do something. I would prefer it if you waited to see what it is that they will do. Unlike the ACA, we do not have to wait to pass the bill to see what is in it. We will be able to see what is in it before, and then comment on it.

I think I am old enough to be a member of AARP, but I am not. I know many members join AARP so that they can get the travel benefits such as motel discounts and car discounts. Saying that everyone that is a member of AARP is retired is not correct. Maybe they are not so much interested in what is going on with retirement; they are more interested in the benefits they are getting now. I would personally prefer it if this was something we could table and bring back in a couple of months while you are still in session, so you can see what Congress has done. Sometimes people are crying wolf, but we do not know what is going to happen. We do not know what is going on back there; I do not think they know what is going on back there. I would prefer just to wait and see.

**Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:**

Thank you, Mr. Wagner, for reminding us of all of the great benefits you receive when you join AARP. This question is for Ms. Hansen as well—we promised the folks who paid in all these years that this is what we were going to do and as a member of the government, I feel like our word is our bond. What do you say to those people who we promised that those benefits would be there?

**John Wagner:**

I agree. When promises are made, they should be kept. It is the matter of how the promises are kept that is the problem. I do not think that people who are coming up for retirement should be deprived of social security or Medicare. They should be getting it, but we do not know how they will get it. Social security and Medicare are not the problem right now; I think they are talking more about the ACA, which covers other things. I do not feel that the older people have anything to worry about. I am worried about where the economy is going to go because of the debt that we have, but as far as social security is concerned, I do not think it will be a problem for the future generations.

**Janine Hansen:**

I believe in keeping promises—that is why I bring up my concerns. At some point in time, people had promises, and they have gone bankrupt. The United States is actually bankrupt right now. Most of our income for the federal government is debt; it is not an income. Even the states have \$45 trillion in unfunded pensions. I do believe we need to look at options in trying to keep our promises because this is an incredible amount of debt, and it is not going to be sustained by other nations forever. I want you to know that I do believe in keeping promises, but sometimes it becomes impossible and that is my concern. I do not want that to happen; I want us to look at alternatives to resolve this.

**Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:**

I appreciate you both recognizing what this resolution is doing—that we want to make sure social security and Medicare are there for our seniors.

**John Wagner:**

I think we all agree that we want Medicare and social security for our future generations. We may not completely agree on how this is going to be done, but we all want it to be done correctly. Congress is going through some growth, and I am hoping that they will get their act together shortly before they start passing bills when they are not sure what is going on. I do support the idea that we do want to maintain retirement for older people.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

I think we are not too far from each other. As I read the resolution, I am not seeing that it really says to do it a certain way. It is saying to retain what we currently have and find a way to fund it in a bipartisan way. That is what we need to focus on. We need to protect what is currently in place and not pull the rug out from under our most vulnerable community.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Unlike some people in this room, I am the old woman in the room. I am an AARP member, and I have paid into social security since I was fourteen years old. I cosigned on this jurisdiction because I feel it is extremely important for us to keep our promises, and I thank you for agreeing that we need to protect what we have promised others. Maybe the way we come to that is through different roads, but the end goal is to protect what is there so that you do not have to take care of me in a few years.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Mr. Gold, I know that Assemblyman Ohrenschall had a question about the increase in population, and I believe that your numbers in terms of membership have been increasing over time. I think when I was a freshman, it was less than 330,000 members. If you could, speak to how the aging population of our state is increasing. What is the rate, and what are we looking at in the near future?

**Barry Gold:**

I do not have the exact statistics on the increase. I can talk to Edward Ableser who is the Administrator for the Aging and Disability Services Division. They keep those numbers. What I can tell you is that we are the fastest growing state for people 65 years and older. If you have been here for a few sessions, you hear the numbers keep increasing on the number of AARP members. It is important that we do something, and we do something quickly. That is what I wanted to clarify. Mr. Sasser talked about how Medicare and the ACA are inextricably linked in so many ways. One of those ways is the ACA; love it or hate it, it increased the trust fund expiration date for Medicare by 12 years. The health care bill they are looking at to repeal and replace is considered to reduce the trust fund by four years. Now, more than ever, is the time for Congress to decide to do something. Exactly what that something is needs to be debated. The other thing that I can offer to the Committee is that some of the people that I talked to earlier with Take A Stand had the top five or six proposals that were being considered or talked about in Washington, D.C., to fix social security. What can we do to make sure it stays strong and gives those guaranteed benefits? We had the pros and cons of these suggestions and ideas, and they ended up being debated by The Heritage Foundation and the National Academy of Social Insurance. They talked about

the pros and cons for people to decide themselves what was going to happen. We really do need to have that debate, and we need to include everyone in that debate, mostly we need to include the citizens of our country who have paid in and earned these benefits and depend on them.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Is there any further testimony in opposition here or in Las Vegas? [There was none.] We will now take testimony in the neutral position in Carson City and in Las Vegas. [There was none.] I will close the hearing on A.J.R. 7. I will now open public comment in Las Vegas.

[([Exhibit C](#)) was submitted but not discussed.]

**John Ridgeway:**

Thank you for the opportunity for public comment. I just want to say that we should audit everything this session. Any way you could put an audit on any bill that requires any funding, let us do it.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Is there any public comment in Carson City?

**Janette Dean:**

I am the Nevada Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) organizer for the ERA since 2014. There are other organizers as well, of course. I have been leading a renewed push in coalition with many other groups—the American Association of University Women (AAUW), League of Women Voters, Nevada Women's Lobby, Women of Washoe, local chapters of National Organization for Women (NOW), ERA Action, other national organizations, and so many other women's organizations that are helping Nevada to ratify in what has been a tardy process. Yesterday was International Women's Day, and we had a rally in Reno at the Believe sign.

As you know, at the Legislature when we have these committee hearings, it is not always easy for the younger generations to be here. They are in school and classes, but the more that they are becoming aware that their equal rights were passed by Congress, but not in the Nevada Constitution, they are confused about why that is the case. If we look back to 1972 at the vote and passage by Congress, it was a whopping 354 to 24 votes for complete passage, as well as 84 to 8 in the Senate. In a press gathering on March 7 when we had our first hearing in the Assembly on S.J.R. 2 for the ERA, *Nevada Independent* reporter, Riley Snyder, who has been doing a fabulous job, reported that in that press conference, Governor Sandoval mentioned that he was in support of the ERA passage. You know what a brilliant attorney he is. More and more people are saying that we should finish this unfinished business. At the rally with all of these young women, when I mentioned what was happening, they loved joining in the chants: "It is about women, it is about rights, it is about time." At the end, when we offered the opportunity to state their names for the record with written testimony that they support S.J.R. 2, they rushed to the front to sign all of these cards

saying that they would like to be included. At a rally of about 300 to 400 women and men, we have 95 cards to submit today from many young women who are counting on our legislators today to vote for S.J.R. 2 in the upcoming committee hearings. We, of course, welcome bipartisan support of Senator Spearman and Senator Cancela's momentous historic resolution that will bring us in line with the majority of states.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Please leave that with the Committee secretary so that we can make that part of the record for S.J.R. 2.

**Janette Dean:**

We were at the International Women's Day table yesterday, and we did turn those cards in already. We were warmly welcomed by many legislators and Helene de Boissiere-Swanson who traveled 7,000 miles across the country to champion the ERA.

**Melanie Meehan Crossley:**

I was present in Washington, D.C., in the gallery of the House of Representatives when the Equal Rights Amendment passed out of Congress in 1972. I look forward to being in the Assembly gallery here in Nevada to see it pass from the state. I have been working with Janette Dean on the ERA in Nevada since I came to Nevada in 1982.

**Chairwoman Diaz:**

Is there any additional public comment? [There was none.] This meeting is now adjourned [at 2:44 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Kailey Taylor  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz, Chairwoman

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is written testimony in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 7, submitted by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association, dated March 9, 2017.