

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

**Seventy-ninth Session
March 15, 2017**

The Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair Nicole J. Cannizzaro at 3:39 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, in Room 2144 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412E of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 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 Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Chair
Senator Kelvin Atkinson
Senator James A. Settlemeyer
Senator Heidi S. Gansert

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Tick Segerblom, Vice Chair (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Julia Ratti, Senatorial District No. 13

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Stewart, Policy Analyst
Kevin Powers, Counsel
Janae Johnson, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director, Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency
Joshua J. Hicks, Southern Nevada Home Builders Association; Nevada Rural Housing Authority; Nevada State Apartment Association
Don Tatro, Executive Director, Builders Association of Northern Nevada

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Dagny Stapleton, Deputy Director, Nevada Association of Counties
Edward Guthrie, CEO Emeritus, Opportunity Village
Nancy E. Brown
Amy Jones, Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Reno
Jessica Preston, Food Bank of Northern Nevada; Three Square Southern Nevada
Ken Crater
Steve Teshara, Principal, Sustainable Community Advocates

CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

I will open the meeting with Senate Concurrent Resolution (S.C.R.) 1.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 1: Directs the Legislative Commission to appoint a committee to conduct an interim study relating to affordable housing within the State of Nevada. (BDR R-835)

SENATOR JULIA RATTI (Senatorial District No. 13):

I want to talk more free form on why I am bringing this bill forward. When I was on the campaign trail, without question nothing comes close to the number of times that I heard about housing. It was interesting it came from across the spectrum of housing. I talked to, as an example, seniors who have lived in the same apartment complex for decades with the low vacancy rates that are in Washoe County. The County is experiencing more growth, which is causing an increase in rental rates. Seniors are forced to consider moving in with their children because they cannot afford anything else on the market. During an Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada event, I heard the No. 1 challenge is workforce and workforce housing. With the rates escalating and the fact that we have been in this extended recession, building has come to a stop. We just do not have the stock we need to accommodate the workforce that is here and is coming.

I had a personal experience with my niece and cousin, who have been working hard to become first-time home buyers. The market has sailed out of their reach. They fall in the median-wage category, and a person who makes a median wage can no longer buy a median-priced home. There is a gap in affordability when you are trying to purchase a home. I have attended meetings where we tried to work on solving the homeless problem. The feedback I received is that we need to get people into housing first for stability. We cannot solve the rest of the challenges without having people in stable housing. We need everywhere from supportive Wrap-Around Housing Services and social

services to affordable housing for our lowest income neighbors, who do not need supportive services but a place to live. There is a need for workforce housing for those who are getting the great new jobs that we have developed. Those who are moving to our community to take some of those jobs need the opportunity to buy a new home. Housing is stressed in Washoe County, and while I was knocking on doors and going to all of these community meetings during the election season, this issue kept coming up. I would have preferred to come to the meeting with some policy solutions that would solve these issues, but they are complex. We need a holistic approach, since if you put pressure on one sector, you have solved one problem, but then it creates another. We could solve workforce housing, but in the process of doing that it will create a problem for affordable housing. I felt it was good to take a step back and consider an Interim approach where we could look at what we could do in terms of a study and a committee to get to solutions. I have submitted my testimony ([Exhibit C](#)).

There was a great Interim study done in 2005 that did a lot of work during the last housing boom. The Committee came up with some great ideas and strategies. Unfortunately, most of that work was set aside because the recession hit and the conditions changed significantly, causing us to focus less on this issue. There are assets that we could build from that would allow us to be relatively efficient with this process. The Washoe County government and stakeholders are already working together to address affordable housing holistically. From my understanding, there are similar efforts under way in southern Nevada. I would like to time this process so that as they are putting together their best ideas at the local level, they could be part of this proposed committee, and present their ideas for what they need from the State level, in *Nevada Revised Statutes* or leveraging funding to be successful.

CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

You mentioned the timing of the local activities and how they might fit into this study if it were to be approved by the Legislature. Do you know when you would expect for those things to wrap up or come up with some recommendations?

SENATOR RATTI:

We have some folks here to provide additional testimony who can give you better clarity on that. Washoe County is under way now, and the timing of our being in Session for a number of months will work nicely. I need to do more

research on what is happening in southern Nevada and the rural areas. I could get back to the Committee with that information.

KIMBERLY H. ROBINSON (Executive Director, Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency):

We recently did a housing study for our region, and we found some interesting statistics. Housing affordability is a persistent issue in our region. I have provided the study showing what was found ([Exhibit D](#)). Over the past 15 years in our community, incomes have risen by 17 percent and housing prices have increased by 62 percent. We have this issue today, and we expect to have this issue into the future. We support S.C.R. 1 and look forward to working with southern Nevada.

JOSHUA J. HICKS (Southern Nevada Home Builders Association; Nevada Rural Housing Authority; Nevada State Apartment Association):

On behalf of the Southern Nevada Home Builders Association, Nevada Rural Housing Authority and the Nevada State Apartment Association, I show support of S.C.R. 1. These agencies play a role in the affordable housing issue and building these homes, and they are community partners. We look forward to being part of this group as it goes forward.

DON TATRO (Executive Director, Builders Association of Northern Nevada):

We support S.C.R. 1 and make our association available. We have large amounts of data, and we are working with the affordable housing group in the northern region. This is a complex issue, and there are a lot of moving parts to it, but hopefully we can shed some light on it and address the issue head on.

DAGNY STAPLETON (Deputy Director, Nevada Association of Counties):

The provision of affordable housing interfaces with services that counties provide in many ways. Counties provide services to the indigent as well as health and human services to the homeless and senior citizens. The availability of safe and affordable housing in our communities impacts many of our most vulnerable citizens who rely on county services. It also impacts the extent of their needs. It is for these reasons that we support S.C.R. 1 and the proposed study. We are ready to participate and provide any information that may be required.

EDWARD GUTHRIE (CEO Emeritus, Opportunity Village):

I am here on behalf of the Opportunity Village, a community training center that

provides assessment, training and employment services for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I have submitted my testimony ([Exhibit E](#)). We strongly support S.C.R. 1.

NANCY E. BROWN:

I am representing myself. I do have letter here from Nevada HAND Housing and Neighborhood Development from Michael Mullin ([Exhibit F](#)). For the record, I would like to show my support for S.C.R. 1 and have submitted my testimony ([Exhibit G](#)).

CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

Make sure you speak with Senator Ratti to make sure she is fine with the proposed additions to the bill in Mr. Mullin's testimony.

AMY JONES (Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Reno):

I support S.C.R. 1 relating to the need for more affordable housing. Our jurisdiction is in Washoe County. We currently have over 1,200 families on our housing choice voucher wait list. We just opened the wait list on February 14, and in the last 30 days we have received 647 new applications for that program. Families get on that wait list and hope and pray they will get vouchers. They may wait for months or even years to receive assistance. Once they receive that assistance, they are hopeful they have vouchers and the opportunity to change their lives. For those families able to find a unit in Washoe County, it takes approximately 53 days to find that unit. Some will take longer since they have to request extensions. Some are not able to find units and the reason is the lack of affordable housing in the community. The rents are not affordable for those families, or landlords are not accepting vouchers because they can get higher rents in the private market. We are seeing the same situations that Senator Ratti explained concerning seniors having to move out because of higher rates.

JESSICA PRESTON (Food Bank of Northern Nevada; Three Square Southern Nevada):

Affordable housing is among one of the top three challenges our clients face. We support S.C.R. 1 and the proposed study and offer any assistance that may be required to complete the study.

KEN CRATER:

I love this State, but we definitely need to do more on affordable housing. I started a blue ribbon commission in Reno called Operation Downtown along with Mayor Hillary Schieve. We have gotten an education in the last year on issues dealing with affordable housing, homelessness, blight, addiction and mental health issues. It makes economic sense to provide housing for those in need because the costs to society are far less than to provide costly services and support. For example, last year, Washoe County paid the Renown Hospital \$22 million for indigent care.

We have great things going in our State now with our economic expansion. We are bringing higher paying jobs, hospitality and retail. Industries in northern Nevada have shrunk, but higher wage jobs will ultimately help. Meanwhile, anything we can do to further workforce housing is good. I want to be clear that we know what the problems and issues are. We need to come up with solutions. There have been numerous studies throughout the year. There was major study in 2006 from northern Nevada, and most of those barriers still exist today. I fully support the efforts of S.C.R. 1 and hope we can move forward toward finding a solution.

STEVE TESHARA (Principal, Sustainable Community Advocates):

I am a resident of Lake Tahoe and support S.C.R. 1 for the same reasons that everyone here has said. While some people may think that everyone in Lake Tahoe is wealthy, that is not the case. We have the same issues with housing, and our population's demographic include the people who provide our community services. If you do not have the people who provide those services living in your community, it makes it a challenge. A lot of people commute over passes during the winter. We saw this winter the difficulty of commuting when roads do not get immediate service.

SENATOR RATTI:

I thank everyone who came to testify, and I agree there have been a lot of studies. The housing agencies have a lot of great data. It is not our intent to research new data or start new research. It is our intent to collect what is out there, put it into one format and look at it holistically, identify any gaps in the research, then initiate what to do next. However, my suspicion is that it is all there. We can take the data and facilitate the Committee having conversations on possible solutions, possible strategies and what if anything could the State do to help find solutions.

I have data that puts emphasis on the need. The Nevada Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted a strategic plan in 2015. The council identified and reported an unmet need of 4,646 permanent supportive housing units and 3,851 transitional housing beds. There are almost 10,000 beds short, and think about the million-dollar Murray story, and the money we are spending to be reactive to folks who do not have supportive housing units or transitional housing bed.

The Nevada Housing Division 2016 annual affordable apartment survey came up with a few things ([Exhibit H](#)). The median vacancy rate was reported to be 2.1 percent, virtually a no vacancy rate. It is a tight rental market. An estimated 1,830 Nevada veterans households who live in low-income housing tax credit properties are at 7.4 percent. That is more than the estimated 1,723 from 2013, and this population is growing. Twenty-nine percent of responding properties reported that all of their units were full and there are no vacancies. The tax credit property waiting list has grown 18 percent since 2015 for a total of 9,470 households now on waiting lists. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Nevada is the worst in the Nation. If you are a low-income person living in Nevada, you have a harder time than anywhere else in the Country. If you are working at minimum wage, you would have to work 71 hours a week to be able to afford a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in Nevada communities. I hope you will support S.C.R. 1.

CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

We will close the hearing on S.C.R. 1 and open the work session on Senate Bill (S.B.) 121.

SENATE BILL 121: Directs the Legislative Commission to appoint a committee to conduct an interim study concerning issues regarding the behavioral and cognitive care needs of older persons. (BDR S-63)

MICHAEL STEWART (Policy Analyst):

An Interim study Committee relating to the behavioral and cognitive care needs of older persons is proposed in S.B. 121. The two amendments attached to the work session document are from Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senatorial District No. 5 ([Exhibit I](#)).

CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

My understanding is when those amendments say "included but not limited to,"

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it would be preferable to have someone in these fields. But there may or may not be someone within the State of Nevada who would qualify as one of these particular specialists.

SENATOR ATKINSON MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 121.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR CANNIZZARO:

Seeing no further business, this meeting is adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Janae Johnson,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit / # of pages		Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	4		Attendance Roster
S.C.R. 1	C	1	Senator Julia Ratti	Remarks
S.C.R. 1	D	2	Kimberly R. Robinson / Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency	Housing Study Infographic
S.C.R. 1	E	1	Edward Guthrie / Opportunity Village	Testimony
S.C.R. 1	F	1	Michael Mullin / Nevada HAND	Testimony
S.C.R. 1	G	3	Nancy E. Brown	Testimony
S.C.R. 1	H	1	Senator Julia Ratti	NHD Annual Report Infographic
S.B. 121	I	3	Michael Stewart	Work Session Document