

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

**Eightieth Session
February 18, 2019**

The Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair James Ohrenschall at 4:48 p.m. on Monday, February 18, 2019, in Room 2144 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 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 James Ohrenschall, Chair
Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Vice Chair
Senator Yvanna D. Cancela
Senator Heidi Seevers Gansert
Senator Keith F. Pickard

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senatorial District No. 5

OTHERS PRESENT:

Valerie Wiener, Chair, Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board
Zhan Okuda-Lim, Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board
Alex Bybee, Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 108.

SENATE BILL 108: Makes various changes relating to the Nevada Youth Legislature. (BDR 17-62)

SENATOR JOYCE WOODHOUSE (Senatorial District No. 5):

Senate Bill 108 proposes a few technical changes to the operations of the Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL). The NYL is a 2-year program created in 2007. The program offers high school students the opportunity to learn the legislative process and to take an active role in State government. The program offers opportunities to influence issues that are important to Nevada's youth. This includes presenting one bill per term to the Nevada Legislature on an issue that is important to Nevada's youth. The NYL Board of Directors was created in 2011 to oversee the finances, policies and practices of the NYL. Students submit applications to the Senators in the Senatorial Districts in which they live or attend high school. Each of Nevada's 21 State Senators appoints a Youth Legislator to represent his or her district.

Senate Bill 108 makes a few changes to the operations of the NYL to help streamline its activities and better align the statutes with NYL practices. The bill increases from two to three the number of unexcused absences from meetings and activities or event days that a NYL member may take before he or she may be removed from the NYL. The proposed amendments ([Exhibit C](#)) clarify in section 1 that the "activities" in which a Youth Legislator may be absent are instead "activity credits."

The new bill also clarifies that an NYL member who is elected to serve as Chair or Vice Chair of the NYL during the first year of his or her term may not be elected to serve in either office during the second year of his or her term.

Senate Bill 108 further provides that NYL may not comply with the Nevada's Open Meeting Law. Most of the members of NYL are minors not yet 18 years of age, and there is a greater concern in recent years with having their activities open to public scrutiny. The intent is to protect the NYL members from unnecessary exposure. The NYL is administered and governed by a board of seven members who are appointed by the Legislative Commission.

Senate Bill 108 clarifies the board membership by requiring that it consists of at least one member of the Senate, one member of the Assembly, one member of the general public and one person who previously served in the Youth Legislature.

In addition to the clarification on activity credits, two other minor amendments are offered in [Exhibit C](#). A minor amendment to section 3 of the bill is to add a few more issues upon which the NYL may comment, evaluate and review. This will provide the NYL with a larger menu of topics to address. The final amendment proposes to delete the requirement that each NYL member conducts at least one outside meeting. This will allow the NYL program the versatility to create, delete or expand assignment and activities as necessary as determined by the NYL Board. This should give the NYL more flexibility in setting forth its program each Interim.

VALERIE WIENER (Chair, Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board):
I support S.B. 108 and the proposed amendments.

ZHAN OKUDA-LIM (Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board):
As an alumni from the NYL, serving from 2009-2011 for Senate District No. 5, and as a former Chair of the NYL from 2010-2011, I support S.B. 108.

ALEX BYBEE (Nevada Youth Legislature Foundation Board):
I serve on the NYL Board of Directors and am a former Chair of the NYL. I support S.B. 108 along with the amendments and brief reflection on the value of the program.

MS. WIENER:

The NYL has been around for 12 years. I sponsored the bill in 2007. The first few years of program, the youths only served one-year terms. After being appointed by Senators, Youth Legislators would have town hall meetings and provide bill draft ideas. The first NYL Foundation Board was created in 2011, and it mirrored the Nevada Legislature experience with a 2-year term. There is substantial training composed of three-hour monthly trainings during the school year. Legislators from each caucus use group discussion leaders and bring in the alumni as mentor trainers to provide counsel. Activities are paired with advisors to the Youth Legislators, and each member has his or her own District Youth Advisory Council (DYAC). District Youth Advisory Council members are invited to attend the training, so the program is grooming more students.

All 21 Youth Legislators participate with intensive training and interactive leadership opportunities, in the bill-making process. The Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) provides the expertise for mechanics and logistics. The Foundation Board brings alumni to provide counsel and the Legislators for discussion with

group leaders. The kickoff for the second year of the program is the start of processing the youths' own measures. The new 21 Youth Legislators have the opportunity to come to the table as witnesses presenting bill ideas and answering questions during the September meeting. At the October meeting, the list is narrowed down to seven.

There is an intense look at the semifinalists from the October meeting. The two finalists in November will participate in a debate with heavy dialogue in preparing involvement in full legislative hearings. The NYL selected this year's measure which will be heard on Nevada Youth Legislature Day on March 19 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Historically, the NYL had six bills; four bills have been signed into law. Youth Legislators took the bills that did not make the cut to their Legislators to sponsor those bills. Of the four that were sponsored, three of them became law. Senator Joyce Woodhouse carried one bill twice on financial fiscal literacy. This Session, two measures are being carried in part or whole by Legislators. Youth Legislators are learning the process and continue to engage and represent their districts for the voices of 27,000 to 42,000 youths under 18 years of age.

The proposed amendments change each provision in section 1, subsection 1, paragraph (b), regarding the number of requirements for vacating a position from 2 to 3. The reason for this change was the program was established for one-year terms instead of two. The program has expanded to a two-year term with up to nine meetings per school year and eight outside activities. The mandatory monthly trainings are three hours, and Youth Legislators have to leave school to attend these trainings. The Foundation Board felt this was worth one credit versus not submitting a letter that is required by the deadline. The outside activities are worth half a credit because there are eight credits required. The Foundation Board does not want to remove any Youth Legislator because of a missed recruitment letter or a report from a DYAC meeting.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
What is a DYAC meeting?

MS. WIENER:
District Youth Advisory Council, and each Youth Legislator is required to have his or her own advisory council. Youth Legislators can have up to two students from every school in their district. These students are encouraged to attend the trainings.

Section 2, subsection 2 of the bill is related to service in leadership. So far, it has not happened for anyone moving up from Vice Chair to Chair. There are 21 exceptional leaders in Nevada participating in a 2-year program. The idea is to give as many of them as possible the chance to serve in a leadership role. If someone were to serve as a Vice Chair the first year, then he or she could not move up to Chair because that means somebody else cannot serve. This would be giving one person two years as a leader. By changing this section, it would give two people an opportunity to be leaders.

Youth Legislators can reapply if they wrap up their second year as a sophomore. Our Chair this year is the first participant to serve in the program all four years of high school.

In section 3, subsection 1, paragraph (b), a new subparagraph (9) is proposed to add another category that includes social, legal or environmental issues to expand the scope of activities, [Exhibit C](#). Many of the issues the Youth Legislators are dealing with now affect social, legal or environmental issues.

In section 3, subsection 2, paragraph (a), the proposed amendment would delete requiring the NYL member to conduct a public meeting from statute. This is from the original bill in 2007 which established 1-year terms. The Foundation Board proposes to remove the word "other" to give the Board more flexibility to create and expand, revise, or delete assignments and activities. This will grow the program, [Exhibit C](#).

MR. OKUDA-LIM:

I would like to share some brief reflections on this amendment both as a current member of the Board and an alumni from the program. I served on the NYL back when the program had one-year terms. The one-year term mirrored the school year with several meetings. When the terms were shorter and before the Foundation Board was established, it made sense in statute to make certain requirements. Since then, I have had the pleasure of serving on the Foundation Board for several years. There is more opportunity to expand and grow the program when the Foundation Board has the flexibility and versatility to work with NYL, alumni and Legislators on programming activities. This flexible basis is needed instead of having our hands tied in statute. I support S.B. 108 and the amendments.

MS. WEINER:

Removing section 3, subsection 4 would allow the NYL to be removed from the Open Meeting Law requirement. Most of the Nevada Youth Legislators are minors, and this would allow flexibility for the learning process. The program has complied with the law during training sessions.

MR. BYBEE:

This program is an important learning experience for the students to mirror the legislative process. The Open Meeting Law does not allow NYL to elect their leadership in a way that is based on what happens in the Legislature. During the election of the Chair and Vice Chair, candidates are seeking to advocate their election. An incident took place through Facebook Messenger, and Ms. Wiener let the students know this is a direct violation of the Open Meeting Law. Removing the Open Meeting Law will allow NYL to learn about policy, politics and self-advocacy.

MS. WEINER:

Section 4, subsection 2, paragraphs (a) through (d) of the bill cover the selection process for NYL Board of Directors. The Board is appointed by the Legislative Commission every two years. The Board feels it is important that these voices be included. There needs to be at least one member from each House, one member from the public and an alumni from the program. The membership comprises two Assembly members and one Senator, two members of the public, and two alumni. There is great representation on the Board.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

There is a new term concerning "activity credits" that is not defined. Should this explanation be defined in the legislation or statute? Is there another process by which this section can be defined so the students are aware of their obligations?

MS. WEINER:

I would be happy to work with staff to get a description to define this section.

MR. OKUDA-LIM:

The membership of the Foundation Board should include at least one alumni from the program. Ms. Wiener has done an amazing job of including alumni voices for trainings, meetings, chaperones and serving as mentors. This is one way to memorialize the experience. Following statute ensures that there is

at least one or more alumni voices at the table during the Foundation Board meetings. The alumni help provide perspective for current and future activities of NYL. I support this amendment, [Exhibit C](#).

MS. WEINER:

The proposed amendment provides in section 5, subsection 3 to remove *Nevada Revised Statutes* 219A.210, thus removing the Open Meeting Law requirements, [Exhibit C](#).

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

Regarding the proposed exemption from the Open Meeting Law: If there was a disciplinary issue with one of the Youth Legislators leading toward removal and the youth wanted to appeal, would it take place at a private hearing?

MS. WEINER:

When NYL members reach two unexcused absences, the law states they will be removed. On the website, there is a frequently asked questions section, and it explains required attendance and absences. Any Youth Legislator has seven days prior to a meeting to request an excused absence. The request goes through the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board. The Board explains carefully those activities that are repetitive or will not rise to the level of an excused absence. Practice for sports is not excused, but a game or tournaments will be excused.

Youth Legislators have 7 days or 24 hours for emergencies to contact the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board for requesting an absence. The Board is flexible about absences but not with required activities. Youth Legislators are provided a calendar before the program starts on key dates. The calendar is reviewed at every meeting for deadlines. There is plenty of time before a deadline to a request an absence. Youth Legislators are well-briefed on the requirements for absences during the program. The NYL members are aware of their absences since Tina Ashdown from the LCB keeps track of these absences. The Board has not had any challenges with releases from the program, as members are well-briefed on these requirements.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

Does the majority of the Youth Legislators support this bill?

Ms. WEINER:

The Board has not presented this bill to them. The Youth Legislators are done with their duties for the year, and the two-year terms have been completed. But 18 of the Youth Legislators will be in Carson City for the Nevada Youth Legislature Day on March 19.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 108.

SENATOR CANCELA MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 108.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO SECONDED THE MOTION.

SENATOR GANSERT:

Can an amendment be added to define "activity credits"?

Ms. WEINER:

I would be happy to work with the Legal Division on providing a definition for this section.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
The meeting is adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Janae Johnson,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit / # of pages		Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 108	C	2	Senator Joyce Woodhouse	Proposed Amendments