

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Eighty-Second Session  
February 16, 2023**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Selena Torres at 9:05 a.m. on Thursday, February 16, 2023, in Room 4100 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/82nd2023](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair  
Assemblywoman Bea Duran, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Max Carter  
Assemblyman Rich DeLong  
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva  
Assemblywoman Cecelia González  
Assemblyman Bert Gurr  
Assemblyman Brian Hibbetts  
Assemblyman Gregory Koenig  
Assemblyman Duy Nguyen  
Assemblyman Richard McArthur  
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor  
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Senator Pat Spearman, Senate District No. 1

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jennifer Ruedy, Committee Policy Analyst  
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel  
Sarah Delap, Committee Counsel  
Diane Abbott, Committee Secretary  
Lindsey Howell, Committee Secretary  
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant



**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jack Robb, Director, Department of Administration  
Kevin D. Doty, Administrator, Purchasing Division, Department of Administration  
Deborah "Dee" Evans, President, Juneteenth Nevada; and Vice Chair and  
Communications Director, National Juneteenth Observance Foundation  
Nevada  
Michelle Maese, President, Service Employees International Union Local 1107  
Pamela Goymes-Brown, Mayor, City of North Las Vegas  
Marlene Lockard, representing Service Employees International Union Local 1107  
Warren Hardy, representing Urban Consortium; City of Mesquite; and City of  
Boulder City  
A.J. Delap, representing MGM Resorts International  
Robin Franklin, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Janet Serial, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Kathy Flanagan, Senior Public Affairs Analyst, Public Services, Springs Preserve,  
Las Vegas Valley Water District, Southern Nevada Water Authority  
Kelcey West, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Richard Hodgson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada  
Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress  
Tessyn Opferman, representing Nevada Women's Lobby  
Jarron Gray, Chair, Board of Directors, Urban Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas,  
Nevada  
Alejandro Rodriguez, Director of Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher  
Education  
Richard P. McCann, representing Nevada Association of Public Safety Officers  
Michael Flores, Director, Government Relations and Community Engagement,  
University of Nevada, Reno  
Morgan Biaselli, representing Las Vegas City Employees' Association  
Patricia Y. Gallimore, President, Reno-Sparks Branch, National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People  
Kenneth B. Dalton, President/Founder, Our Story, Inc., Reno, Nevada  
Keith Whitfield, Ph.D., President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Taylor Duffy, Government Affairs Extern, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Theodore "TJ" Milk, Government Affairs Extern, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Berna Rhodes-Ford, General Counsel, Nevada State College  
Jeri Burton, Co-Executive Director, Programs Coalition Coordinator, Nevada  
Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Sarah Evans, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Kamilah Bywaters, M.Ed., M.Div., President, Las Vegas Alliance of Black School  
Educators  
Lawrence Weekly, Chief of Staff/Chief Diversity Officer, College of Southern  
Nevada  
Lilith Baran, Policy Manager, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada

Oliver Welsch, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada  
Will Rucker, Co-Leader, Compassionate Las Vegas  
A'Esha Goins, representing Las Vegas Branch No. 1111, National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People  
Willie Williams, State Director, Juneteenth Nebraska and Juneteenth New Mexico  
Ashley Dodson, Co-President, Cannabis Equity and Inclusion Community, Las Vegas  
Jo Cato, Board Member, African Chamber of Commerce and Tourism  
Amy Koo, Political Director, One APIA Nevada

**Chair Torres:**

[Roll was taken, and protocols were explained.] We will begin with the presentation from Kevin Doty, from the Purchasing Division, the Department of Administration. I also see Director Jack Robb. Thank you and welcome to our Committee on Government Affairs.

**Jack Robb, Director, Department of Administration:**

With me today I have Kevin Doty to go over the Purchasing Division and then we can answer any questions you may have about his presentation.

**Kevin D. Doty, Administrator, Purchasing Division, Department of Administration:**

As our name suggests, the State Purchasing Division is in the business of acquiring goods and services for state agencies. The Nevada Department of Transportation handles road projects. The State Public Works Division handles construction of buildings. State Purchasing is usually involved in the acquisition of any other type of goods or services, which includes a very wide range of things. A year and a half ago State Purchasing helped Medicaid put in place contracts worth \$11.4 billion. That is billion with a "B", because Medicaid spends a lot of big federal money. We also buy hay and dairy feed for the prison ranch. Our range of responsibilities runs from big information technology projects to contracts we put in place to buy computers and office supplies.

Our work is governed by *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) Chapter 333 and the regulations promulgated pursuant to *Nevada Administrative Code* (NAC) Chapter 333 [page 2, [Exhibit C](#)]. The most important concept in our rules is the concept of best value. That is what we are statutorily obligated to try and obtain on behalf of agencies whenever we are obtaining goods or services.

We have 26 approved full-time equivalents [FTEs] [page 3]. We use NevadaEPro.com as our online procurement system which the Legislature gave us the approval for in 2017, and they gave us an administrative fee to pay for in 2017. I thank the Legislature for doing that because that is how we were able to continue buying goods and services throughout the pandemic as we worked remotely. It has been an incredible help to what we do. I included the number of registered vendors and Nevada-based vendors in our system. When I did this slideshow two years ago, in the 2021 Legislative Session, our number of Nevada-based vendors was 2,700. We have managed to add another 1,000 Nevada-based vendors in the last two years. That is something I am very proud of. We do a lot of outreach to try to find as many Nevada-based vendors as possible to register in our system.

Our core responsibilities include procurement support and obtaining goods and services for state agencies [page 4, [Exhibit C](#)]. Some contracts we do not put in place for individual state agencies. We put them in place to be used by multiple agencies. We call those statewide contracts, and we are responsible for managing those in State Purchasing. The ones we put in place for agencies, the agencies manage themselves. We also provide education programs to certify contract managers for the different agencies so that they do a good job managing the contracts. We run the state and federal surplus property program. I will talk a little bit more about that later. I want to highlight the procurement card (p-card) and the preferred purchase programs right now. It says we spent \$1.8 million with Opportunity Village in last fiscal year. Many people can debate what the worst-spent money by the State of Nevada is, depending upon what your beliefs are, but the best money the State of Nevada spends is the money we spend with Opportunity Village. We use state money to pay Opportunity Village to do high quality work for the state. Whether it is janitorial work, copying or shredding, it is a triple win for the state whenever we give business to Opportunity Village.

Here are statistics on our procurement support [page 5]. We run a solicitation for both goods and services. The dollar amounts can vary depending upon the type of work we are doing at any given time. The statutory limits: if it is \$100,000 or more, we are running the request for proposals. Below that amount the agencies can run it. The statutory limit we go out for goods is \$50,000. We must do the invitation to bid, not the agencies.

Here are the more specific numbers on the number of people we have trained and certified as contract managers [page 6]. The statewide contracts number is up significantly. We have put more contracts in place to be used by multiple agencies. Part of that has to do with the substantial number of direct care agreements we put in place. Those are the health care providers for use by both the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR). We manage the state procurement and travel card spending which provides a rebate to the state as well.

State and federal surplus property [page 7]: we have managed to return significantly more money to the agencies in the last couple of fiscal years, in part because of the rising price of used vehicles that we sent to auction. These numbers will drop soon because agencies have not been turning in their used cars. The agencies have been having to keep their used cars because there simply are not enough new cars to buy, even when they are authorized to buy cars and the cars have met the age and mileage requirements. It is simply difficult to find them at dealerships. It is something that many people have encountered personally looking for a vehicle. It is because of supply chain issues.

The Federal Surplus Property Program is something we have been working to sell. It allows many entities, not just state agencies but also local governments, schools, certain nonprofits, and veteran-owned small businesses to receive federal surplus property at no cost to them, which is something that was added by the federal government more recently. They only pay the Purchasing Division a small handling fee because the federal government wants us to keep that program self-sufficient. That is why the small service fee is paid.

Our only legislative initiatives this session [page 8, [Exhibit C](#)] include a decision to add three positions to meet increased responsibilities. These positions are needed because when DETR transferred the Preferred Purchase Program, usually staffed with 1 1/2 to 3 FTEs, we did not receive any new staff for that. When that was transferred to us from DETR, we tried to absorb that cost. Additionally, we now collect an administration fee that contributes to our revenue without any additional staff, and we have taken over the direct client care services that used to be provider agreements completed by the agencies themselves. For those reasons we have asked for three positions to meet our increased workload.

Finally, there is a one-time appropriation of \$7.1 million to purchase a Las Vegas warehouse. We used to have a warehouse in downtown Las Vegas on South Commerce Street, south of the Clark County building that was repeatedly broken into. We had issues when the Division of Emergency Management of the Department of Public Safety leased a large warehouse in southwest Las Vegas for the purpose of storing personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic. We started subleasing space in that warehouse. As of October 1, 2022, State Purchasing is now running that entire warehouse. The Division of Emergency Management, with the pandemic ending, wanted to get out of the warehouse business. State Purchasing is statutorily authorized to run a warehouse, so we have taken over the operations and are doing our best to push out the PPE that was purchased with federal funds to entities that can use it. The \$7.1 million is to purchase a smaller warehouse in Las Vegas that will meet all our needs for state and federal surplus property. With that, I am happy to take any questions.

**Chair Torres:**

I will go ahead and open it for questions from the Committee.

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

I particularly noticed the increase in the Nevada-based vendors. That is great. We are helping our own companies that are here. I am wondering if the Purchasing Division has anything in terms of a supplier diversity program to encourage diverse businesses or vendors to do business with the state?

**Kevin Doty:**

The Governor's Office of Economic Development is usually the one responsible for reaching out to a lot of different businesses in Nevada and has programs in place. I had this conversation with Senator Neal recently about potentially doing something along the lines of supplier diversity that would include State Purchasing. We do not have anything right now beyond the one position that does vendor outreach and is dedicated to finding as many Nevada-based vendors as possible.

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

Within that though, is there no targeting on the diversity side, as in veteran-owned, woman-owned, minority-owned businesses?

**Kevin Doty:**

That is correct.

**Chair Torres:**

Are there any additional questions from the Committee? [There were none.]

We do have Assembly Bill 26 on the agenda for today. I want to let the Committee know we did have it filed, but added as an exhibit [[Exhibit D](#)] from Director Jack Robb is a request to pull A.B. 26 for further consideration. I wanted the Committee to know it was not us pulling the bill from the Department of Administration, but it was a request made from the Department. We just wanted that clear on the record.

**Assembly Bill 26: Revises provisions related to state-owned automobiles. (BDR 27-212)**

We will now go to the reason we have such a big crowd in Assembly Government Affairs this morning. We will go ahead and open the hearing on Assembly Bill 140, which makes Juneteenth a legal holiday in this state.

**Assembly Bill 140: Makes Juneteenth Day a legal holiday in this State. (BDR 19-63)**

We are incredibly lucky. This is our first presentation that we are going to have the opportunity to have from a colleague. Assemblywoman Thomas also sits on this Committee and has sat on this Committee now since the previous session, and she will be helping present this bill alongside Senator Spearman. There is somebody else in Las Vegas copresenting with Assemblywoman Thomas today who will be testifying regarding Juneteenth.

I will call a one-minute recess [9:19 a.m.].

We will reconvene [9:20 a.m.].

**Assemblywoman Clara Thomas, Assembly District No. 17:**

I am pleased to come before you this morning to present Assembly Bill 140, which makes Juneteenth Day a legal holiday in Nevada rather than a day of observance. According to the Congressional Research Service's Juneteenth fact sheet, the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. However, it was nearly 2 1/2 years later, on June 19, 1865, when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed. It is this day, June 19, 1865, when slaves in the last geographic area in America where slavery existed learned of their freedom, that we commemorate in celebrating Juneteenth Day. On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed Senate Bill 475 of the 117th Congress to create Juneteenth National Independence Day. Juneteenth National Independence Day is to be observed on June 19, or the Monday following if June 19 falls on a Sunday, or the Friday preceding if June 19 falls upon a Saturday. Assembly Bill 140 mirrors the provisions of the federal legislation to ensure that the state holiday is observed on the same day as the federal holiday. At this point, I would like to thank former Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford, who carried Assembly Bill 174 of the 76th Session that established Juneteenth Day as a period of observance.

Periods of observance are not to be confused with legal paid holidays such as Fourth of July or Thanksgiving Day, but instead they generally involve the Governor issuing a proclamation to raise public awareness of a special day, week, or month. Other examples of periods of observance recognized in state law include Mother's Day, César Chávez Day, Veterans Day at the Legislature, and Constitution Week, among others. While Assembly Bill 140 repeals the day of observance, it replaces it with a legal paid holiday. Currently Nevada has 11 legal holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Nevada Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Family Day—the Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Juneteenth Day will be the twelfth legal holiday for the state. The bill makes a conforming change to account for the closure of state, county, and city governmental offices for Juneteenth Day, but that is the entirety of the bill.

I would like to recognize the City of North Las Vegas as the first entity to proclaim Juneteenth Day a paid holiday for their city's local government employees during the year 2022. There will be a fiscal impact, but this is a policy committee. This is good policy. I tried to keep my remarks brief as I am joined by Deborah "Dee" Evans, President of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation Nevada, and Michelle Maese, President of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1107, to present the bill.

**Deborah "Dee" Evans, President, Juneteenth Nevada; and Vice Chair and Communications Director, National Juneteenth Observance Foundation Nevada:**

I am the founder of Juneteenth Nevada. I have been a resident of Clark County for nearly 20 years, and currently I reside in Spring Valley. National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJOF) is recognized as the subject matter expert on Juneteenth by the Library of Congress and the 400 Years of African-American History Commission. The NJOF founder, Reverend Ronald V. Myers, Sr., M.D., obtained Juneteenth legislation in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Our national president, Steve Williams, was able to present the facts that Juneteenth is not just a Texas holiday, but a national holiday with roots leading to all states and territories. Nevada's 2011 Day of Observance legislation brought to the Assembly by Harvey Munford and signed by Governor Brian Sandoval was the thirty-ninth state ratification. In 2021, we worked with elected officials to obtain unanimous passage in the United States Senate and 417 votes in the United States House of Representatives.

Juneteenth has legislation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. More than 17 of these, including Texas, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Utah, Oregon, Nebraska, West Virginia, Alabama, and Minnesota have already passed state holidays. We are currently verifying the latest total.

The Moulin Rouge Agreement was Nevada's contribution to the Juneteenth wave of freedom. On March 26, 1960, at a meeting which included National Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Branch President Dr. James McMillan and Nevada Governor Grant Sawyer, Las Vegas gaming executives and casino bosses agreed to end their discriminatory policies and

allow African Americans access to public accommodations and to patronize their establishments.

With the attainment of freedom, our ancestors founded 100 Black towns, of which 12 remain in existence. We are Americans who built this country and created inventions that made life simpler, easier, and more productive, beginning with our arrival on the eastern shores in 1619 through our ancestors' enslavement period, until today.

Juneteenth is the realization of the freedom legislations: the actualization of the Emancipation Proclamation, General Order No. 3, and the Thirteenth Amendment of the *U.S. Constitution*, making this the true Independence Day for all Americans, adding balance to the celebration of freedoms as we recognize the wave of freedom in 2023.

Representing Juneteenth Nevada and the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, I am here to support passage of A.B. 140, revising A.B. 174 of the 76th Session sponsored by Assemblyman Harvey Munford in 2011, to be coordinated with U.S. Senate Bill 475 of the 117th Session, the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act signed into law in 2021 by President Biden with our board member Opal Lee at the table, and observed on June 19. Juneteenth Nevada and the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation are asking for the State of Nevada to coordinate the recognition with the Juneteenth National Independence Day federal bill to be observed on June 19; and for the Nevada state government buildings across the state to purchase and fly the authorized and copyrighted, red, white, and blue Juneteenth flag on the Nineteenth of June.

**Chair Torres:**

Thank you, Ms. Evans. We are going to come back here to Carson City to hear from Ms. Maese.

**Michelle Maese, President, Service Employees International Union Local 1107:**

My name is Michelle Maese. We represent 19,000 health care and public sector workers throughout Nevada. Additionally, I am a long-time employee of the Clark County Department of Family Services. On behalf of the workers that we represent, we strongly urge the Legislature to pass A.B. 140 to make Juneteenth Freedom Day an official state holiday. We believe this holiday must be celebrated on June 19, which corresponds to the day in 1865 when many of the last slaves were emancipated. We are an anti-racist organization in union at SEIU Local 1107. We are proud of that, because we know our strength and effectiveness in advocating for better jobs for all working people comes from our ability to build unity, empathy, and understanding across racial lines.

Making Juneteenth a state holiday is about acknowledging, celebrating, and learning from our history as a nation and as Nevadans. It is also about ensuring that our state has understanding, fairness, and justice in the present time. Black Nevadans face serious disparities in housing, education, income, and policing. Twenty-one percent of Black Nevadans are stuck in poverty and racially profiled, and Black women are much more likely



to die in childbirth. These statistics led Governor Sisolak to issue a proclamation declaring racism a public health emergency.

Sitting here before you as the first Black president of SEIU Local 1107, I know how far we have come, but I know how far we have to go. Making Juneteenth a state holiday would be a long-overdue recognition of the unfortunate and historic oppression of Black Americans and Nevadans. It would be good to create consistent opportunity for regular conversation and education about the root of inequities while creating concrete policy solutions to adjust, address, and demonstrate lasting change and effective systematic change. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." Eighteen states have passed legislation officially to observe the day as a state holiday.

Let us continue to make justice more present in the great state of Nevada, if Nevada would make this the nineteenth state to declare June 19, Juneteenth, as an official state holiday.

**Senator Pat Spearman, Senate District No. 1:**

I represent Senate District No. 1, which is located entirely in North Las Vegas. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of A.B. 140 with my colleague and to also be at the table with the first Black president of SEIU. I just want to take a couple of minutes and set the record straight. We have heard a lot of comments here within the last year or so about three letters of the alphabet— not A, B, C but C, R, T. Let us set the record straight. Critical race theory (CRT) is not taught in grades K-12. It is something that is taught in graduate school, or more likely in law school. Juneteenth is an opportunity to set the record straight so that people are not prancing around the country talking about, "We have got to do away with this. We have got to make sure that we eliminate Black history." If you eliminate Black history, you eliminate American history.

Let us set the record straight. We talk about Black folks in America. Yes, we did help build this country, but we did not have access to the things that we built. We did not have access to the schools that we built. We did not have access to the hospitals that we built. We did not have access to the neighborhoods that we built. We did not even have access to the government that we built. Let us set the record straight. Juneteenth is an opportunity for us to talk about real, stark, and very historic and real and factual evidence about the contributions of Black folks here in America.

When I was stationed in Texas at Fort Hood, and then again in Austin and San Antonio, one of the things that I was most proud of was the first time that I ever saw Juneteenth celebrated at such a magnitude. It really made me proud because Texas is one of the places that my ancestors have their roots in. When you talk about Juneteenth, you are talking about acknowledging a part of American history; painful though it may be, it is still a part of American history. At times I get a headache, but I am not ready to chop off my head. At times, my hands hurt, but I am not ready to chop off my hands. We talk about Juneteenth. We are talking about a very real part of American history. Juneteenth allows us an opportunity to celebrate American history and make sure we are recognizing the

contributions of a very large portion of Americans who have heretofore been denied many of the rights that those born in privilege take for granted.

Look at me. I am the color that I am, the hue that I have. I do not have a lot of melanin. My eyes are hazel. My natural hair color is red. When I was younger, I used to have freckles. People do not believe that I am Black, but I am. I say that because Juneteenth and my presence in every room are to remind everyone of the painful part of history. I am the color that I am because the slave master that owned my great-grandmother also used her as a concubine. She was not his wife, but she did not have a choice, so I look at my skin. I look at my hair. I look at my eye color. This is America. Painful part though it may be, it is something that we are to learn from and something that we are to embrace. Because pain and struggle are part of the American way and American history. Observing Juneteenth as a state holiday helps us to go from being allergic to intelligence and talking about CRT as though it is something that kindergarteners learn, it allows us to emerge from the doldrums of ignorance and accelerate to the heights where the Almighty wanted us to be. I will close with these words of the prophet Amos: Now let justice roll down like a mighty river. Now let justice roll down like a mighty river. Now let justice roll down like a mighty river. Set the record straight.

**Chair Torres:**

I do want to thank the presenters for making today work. I felt like this was a fitting bill for us to hear in honor of both Black History Month as well as the Nevada Black Legislative Caucuses and Black Leadership Summit going on today. It was a unique opportunity to give people the opportunity to participate in the bill hearing here in the building. We will go ahead and open it up for questions from Committee members.

**Assemblywoman Taylor:**

I say to Senator Spearman, you preached a sermon. I am going to pass the collection plate. We will take up an offering in here to pay for some of those flags we need to get. I digress. I do not have a question, Madam Chair. It is certainly clear to me the reason and the purpose for this, as I sit here as the first African-American female from northern Nevada to walk the halls in the Assembly, I am reminded of the importance of the history that we have, that we are still making history in the great state of Nevada. It is a great state. We know as a state, we are born out of some of the challenge, out of the struggle, coming from what we are very much talking about commemorating, and because Nevada really is the Battle Born state, being connected to Juneteenth, the Emancipation Proclamation would definitely be fitting for us to celebrate because it is not only a part of American history, but Juneteenth is uniquely a part of Nevada history. I sit here proud to hear this. I am getting emotional. Who knew that was going to happen? I sit here enormously proud to be here, to hear this hearing on A.B. 140 and to be a part of this, this great state, and this great move and hopefully passing this great bill.

**Assemblyman D'Silva:**

I first learned about Juneteenth when I was in high school from a friend of mine who was from Houston, Texas. There was a celebration in the summertime, and I thought, this is a big

deal. I had no idea. During my first trip to Galveston, Texas, while I was in the Marine Corps around 2004, I went to the actual site where General Order No. 3 was first read and was amazed that there was not even one historical marker. There was nothing commemorating this monumental moment in American history. A mere ten years later, we have a day that is commemorated as a national holiday from the highest levels of government. Now, here in the state of Nevada, we are on the cusp of commemorating Juneteenth as an official holiday in the state of Nevada. This really shows how important it is for us to embrace our history, as Senator Spearman mentioned here in her excellent presentation, and how important it is for us to organize around issues that matter to us. In a truly short period of time, now we have not just an important historical marker in Galveston, Texas, but we see a national movement that is commemorating this monumental moment in the history of our nation.

I want to thank you all, everybody in this room who has participated in making this happen, and I am honored to sit before you all and humbled by your presentations and your comments.

**Chair Torres:**

Any additional questions from the Committee? Thank you so much for your presentation. I know this is exciting conversation that we are having. I do hope to that we work on making sure there are educational materials available for schools. Unfortunately, I do not think that Juneteenth has been a part of the curriculum for a long time and there are limited resources available for schools now that wish to teach it. As an educator myself, I know there are very limited resources within the curriculum. Hopefully, they start a push to improve the Black history in our education system as well.

At this time, we will go ahead and invite individuals to come up and testify in support. We have Mayor Pamela Goymes-Brown from the City of North Las Vegas on Zoom.

**Pamela Goymes-Brown, Mayor, City of North Las Vegas:**

I call in today to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 140, making Juneteenth a state holiday. In June of 2021, after the federal government voted to observe June 19 as a federal holiday, the City of North Las Vegas Council promptly passed Resolution No. 2665, becoming the first municipality in Nevada to formally recognize June 19 as Juneteenth. The following October, the city council went a step further and updated contracts with its employee bargaining groups to add Juneteenth as an official city holiday. North Las Vegas is proudly the largest minority-majority city in the state and one of the largest in the nation, and by closing its doors on Juneteenth, the city allows its employees time off with families and loved ones to reflect on the significance and importance of Juneteenth.

As a former educator and now the first African-American mayor in Nevada's history, observance of Juneteenth is as much about reflection as it is about education and awareness. It was not until I attended Prairie View A&M University, a historically black college/university in Prairie View, Texas, that I learned what happened on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas. In Texas, everyone knows the importance of Juneteenth. It is a part of the

state's proud history beginning at the elementary level. As a young African-American girl who grew up as a member of one of the original families on the historic westside of Las Vegas, I wish I had talked about Juneteenth as a pivotal moment in my genealogy. I want to thank Assemblywoman Thomas and the cosponsors of A.B. 140 for working with North Las Vegas.

North Las Vegas has proposed similar legislation this session with Assembly Bill 31. However, in a show of solidarity with the members of our state delegation and the cosponsors, we ask that this Committee rest A.B. 31. North Las Vegas will join in supporting A.B. 140. We urge unanimous passings, asking the state of Nevada to align with the federal government and make Juneteenth a state holiday. Thank you for your time and consideration of this essential legislation.

**Chair Torres:**

Thank you, Mayor, and thank you for your support for this legislation and for letting us know that we can go ahead and rest A.B. 31. At this time, we will go ahead and come to Carson City for testimony in support of A.B. 140.

**Marlene Lockard, representing Service Employees International Union Local 1107:**

Our president, Michelle Maese's testimony stated, and others here today have or will state, the history, the need, the equity, and all of the very legitimate reasons why we must pass this bill now. Consequently, I would like to offer a different perspective to the discussion. On another planet far, far away in time, I had the honor and privilege to work for a governor who in 1983 proposed making Martin Luther King Jr. Day a state holiday in his first State of the State message. I have that moment seared into my memory and that of the late, great Senator Joe Neal jumping to his feet and air pumping his fists with joy, but that joy was short-lived. The bill did not pass that session. It did not pass in 1985 either. An excerpt from John L. Smith's *The West Side Slugger* stated Neal's biennial call for the King holiday and a celebration of African-American historical contributions came like clockwork each session. Year after year, he made the case for its inclusion; he called forth historical anecdotes of the contributions of Black people to Nevada and the nation at large, and each year, for one reason or another or no stated reason at all, his voice echoed through the building and died away. Senator Joe Neal stated, "It is painful that in 1985 that I find it necessary to have inserted into the journal words that speak about my representation in this country and my unending quest to see that the Declaration of Independence applies to me also." It was not until 1987 that Governor Bryan was finally able to sign the bill.

**Chair Torres:**

Thank you, Ms. Lockard. Your time is up, but if you can submit your comments for the record so that we can view them, we really appreciate you coming to testify.

**Warren Hardy, representing Urban Consortium, City of Mesquite and City of Boulder City:**

The Urban Consortium is made up of the cities of Las Vegas, Reno, Henderson, and Sparks, and I am also here to represent the Cities of Mesquite and Boulder City. I am pleased to be

here to speak in favor of A.B. 140, making Juneteenth a state holiday. I am proud to report that our cities have already implemented this as part of their recognition at the local level as a paid holiday. I am paid to be here today on behalf of the clients I represent, but I cannot help it if I personally identify and associate myself with Senator Spearman's remarks. I was interested in Assemblyman D'Silva's comments that he first learned about this in school. I am 59 years old. I did not learn about this in school. That is unacceptable. Senator Spearman's comments regarding our history and how important our history is to each of us, none of us were alive for this part of our history, but it is our history. We must understand it so we can learn from it and so we do not make mistakes. We are part of history, but it is modern history which someday will be ancient history, and what we do now matters a great deal going forward. I really appreciate Senator Spearman's comments regarding the fact that history collectively belongs to all of us regardless of our position and our responsibility is to learn from it, to move forward, and do the right thing.

**A.J. Delap, representing MGM Resorts International:**

We are certainly in support of A.B. 140. I would like to ask the Committee at their leisure to view our formally submitted letter of support [[Exhibit E](#)]. And with that, I will conclude my testimony.

**Robin Franklin, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I wanted to also endorse and put in my support for this bill. I am a Las Vegas native, and I learned about this as an adult as well. I do believe that I was heartened by our country in recognizing this as a national holiday by the federal government. I also believe that Nevada should be part of that to observe this as a holiday. This is a second Independence Day. This is where all Americans are free. If we, as Nevadans, as diverse as we are as a state and as diverse as we are in the cities in our state, I believe this would be monumental for us to continue to support.

**Janet Serial, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:**

I am representing the Washoe County Democratic Party, Black Caucus. I am here to testify in favor of A.B. 140. I am a Washoe County resident who grew up in the Washoe County area. I am 65 years old. I did not learn of Juneteenth until 1990 through the Northern Nevada Black Cultural Awareness Society, which celebrated its first Juneteenth at that time. I wanted to leave by saying, I was asked to acknowledge the sacrifices that over 200,000 formerly enslaved people of African-American descent made in joining the Union as United States colored troops towards ending slavery. This would honor those troops.

**Kathy Flanagan, Senior Public Affairs Analyst, Public Services, Springs Preserve,  
Las Vegas Valley Water District, Southern Nevada Water Authority:**

We enthusiastically support this measure, and we encourage its passage.

**Kelcey West, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am the senior pastor at Nehemiah Christian Church. I am here to support the passing of A.B. 140. I was born Kelcey Anderson LaGrone. At the age of eight, I was told to tell my teachers my name was Kelcey Anderson West. At the age of 14, I learned that everything

I had been told about my family structure was not accurate. At the age of 48, upon doing my research, I was able to discover my truth concerning who my father was and where I really came from. I am sharing this testimony with you simply to say at 51, I can celebrate life where I come from because I know the truth and I believe every child, every person, deserves the right to celebrate their truth.

**Richard Hodgson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I was first made aware of Juneteenth in the early 1980s as a young African American growing up in southern California. I will be 53 years old next month, and to be in the state of Nevada at a Committee hearing regarding making this a state holiday, we have come a long way. I am definitely in support of A.B. 140.

**Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada:**

I am in support of Assembly Bill 140 to make Juneteenth a legal holiday in the state of Nevada. The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has created a watershed moment for change in our nation to address systemic racism and historical injustices. In just the past three years, nearly two dozen states have moved to recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday. We believe it is time for Nevada to join them, and I urge your support of this bill.

**Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress:**

I am here today in proud support of A.B. 140. Being able to celebrate Juneteenth should be an opportunity that all Nevadans have to celebrate the abolition of slavery in this country, especially after our testimony earlier this week about the removal of slavery from our *Nevada Constitution*. This holiday is important as is Nevada Day, Presidents Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and the countless others that let us celebrate our history and the advancements we have made in the state and this country. This is critical for the education of Nevadans. As the Assemblywoman said, I did not learn about Juneteenth until I went to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This holiday is something our organization already celebrates and observes as a paid holiday, and we hope that our state will do the same. Please support this important bill.

**Tessyn Opferman, representing Nevada Women's Lobby:**

Senator Spearman talked about commemorating Black History, and we feel there is no better way than to pass this measure and establish Juneteenth as a holiday. We are so appreciative that organizations and governmental agencies throughout the state are already recognizing Juneteenth, and now we feel it is time that the state passed this as well.

**Jarron Gray, Chair, Board of Directors, Urban Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas:**

We are proud to support the passage of A.B. 140 and making Juneteenth a state holiday.

**Alejandro Rodriguez, Director of Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education:**

Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is testifying in support of A.B. 140. The Board of Regents' Inclusion, Diversity Equity and Access Committee voted unanimously at its February 1 meeting to support a resolution encouraging the Nevada Legislature to adopt

Juneteenth as a state holiday. While this resolution will now go before the full Board of Regents at its next regular board meeting, we are proud to offer our support today for A.B. 140.

**Richard P. McCann, representing Nevada Association of Public Safety Officers:**

I do not see law enforcement represented here today, so they are now. We are here today to support A.B. 140 to make June 19, Juneteenth, a state, county, and city legal holiday.

**Michael Flores, Director, Government Relations and Community Engagement, University of Nevada, Reno:**

I will be brief. We are in full support of A.B. 140. Thank you.

**Morgan Biaselli, representing Las Vegas City Employees' Association:**

Las Vegas City Employees' Association supports this bill and would like to thank Assemblywoman Thomas and Senator Spearman for bringing it forward. I am very proud that we get to testify on this.

**Patricia Y. Gallimore, President, Reno-Sparks Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:**

I am here this morning to talk in support about A.B. 140 to make Juneteenth a legal holiday. I grew up with this. I am from southern California. I moved here 32 years ago. My family is from Texas, so it was a staple in my household. No one else knew what Juneteenth was. I certainly did. I am a scholar of history. History is history regardless of what it is. Good, bad, ugly, and indifferent, it is all part of what history is. It is high time for us to celebrate all history and so, as I am being very brief here, I just want to make sure that everyone knows I am in support in terms of the NAACP, Reno and Sparks Branch. Put it on the record. We support A.B. 140.

**Kenneth B. Dalton, President/Founder, Our Story, Inc., Reno, Nevada:**

We celebrate and concentrate on contributions we call unsung heroes to northern Nevada, meaning African Americans. This past year we opened the Northern Nevada African American Firefighter Museum. We are definitely in support of this bill, and we would like to see it go forward.

**Chair Torres:**

Is there anybody else here in Carson City wishing to testify in support of A.B. 140? [There was no one.] We will go ahead and go to the room in Las Vegas. Is there anybody wishing to testify in support of A.B. 140 in Las Vegas?

**Keith Whitfield, Ph.D., President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

I am NSHE's first African-American president, and as a newish Nevadan, I have appreciated and enjoyed the many community celebrations and efforts of community luminaries to highlight the significance of Juneteenth. Like many who have gone before me, I learned about Juneteenth when I was in graduate school in Texas. Even in the midst of learning all of the things related to my profession, perhaps the greatest learning experience I had was

learning about Juneteenth. Our university, UNLV, is the second-most diverse institution in the country. This legislative proposal is aligned with our values because the crux of Juneteenth is not only about freedom, but it is also about education and about progress. I urge you to support A.B. 140, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. With me, I have two of our outstanding students at UNLV who would like to speak as well.

**Taylor Duffy, Government Affairs Extern, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

I am a William S. Boyd School of Law student here at UNLV. I am also an extern at UNLV's Office of Government and Community Engagement. I agree with President Whitfield's testimony, and I am in support of passing A.B. 140.

**Theodore "TJ" Milk, Government Affairs Extern, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

I am a William S. Boyd School of Law student as well. I am an extern with UNLV's Government and Community Engagement Office, and I want to echo the sentiments of President Whitfield in support of A.B. 140.

**Berna Rhodes-Ford, General Counsel, Nevada State College:**

I am the first African-American general counsel of an NSHE institution in the state, on behalf of Dr. DeRionne Pollard, first African-American female president of an NSHE institution in the state. We are in full support of A.B. 140. We would like to thank the sponsors, Assemblywoman Thomas, Senator Spearman, and all others who have cosigned on to the bill. On behalf of the gloriously diverse student population of Nevada State College as well as our faculty and senate, we are in full support. We do not have a fiscal note, and I would just like to say I am a native Texan. I grew up knowing about Juneteenth. In law school, we had a saying on the back of our shirts for the Black law students' association that said, "Until justice is blind to color, emancipation will be a proclamation, not a fact." Passage of A.B. 140 will help us move one step closer to making emancipation a fact and not a proclamation.

**Jeri Burton, Co-Executive Director, Programs Coalition Coordinator, Nevada Chapter, National Organization for Women:**

I want to thank Assemblywoman Clara Thomas and Senator Pat Spearman for this bill. I am here in support of A.B. 140. I am also a native Nevadan, and I was educated here in Clark County. I also did not learn about Juneteenth in school. Nevada National Organization for Women is in support of A.B. 140 making Juneteenth a state holiday. We recognize this is just a step towards a bigger goal of accurate education on the history of Black people in our country, but also recognizing the disparities in housing, education, income, and health care in our Black communities. We hope there will be legislation in the 2023 Session working on these issues. In 2022, we added the most inclusive equal rights amendment in the country to the *Nevada Constitution*, and now we need to put those words to work for equality for all.

**Sarah Evans, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I work at the Department of Family Services. I am a member of SEIU Local 1107, and I support A.B. 140.



**Kamilah Bywaters, M.Ed., M.Div., President, Las Vegas Alliance of Black School Educators:**

It is very important that we are in conversation about how we can do right by the individuals, the Black people and people within the African diaspora, who have been impacted by slavery. Thank you to Senator Spearman and Assemblywoman Thomas. Thank you to SEIU. Today is a great day, and I can imagine that our ancestors are jumping for joy. Historically, American society has been apprehensive about honoring and remembering the plight of the enslaved. June 19, as a state holiday, is a way of honoring and remembering people of the African and Black diaspora that have been impacted and are still impacted today by the horrific, dehumanizing, and subpar conditions faced by an innocent group of people. Let us make history, Nevada. Let us do what is right in our state and join other states that have made a commitment to honoring African and Black people within the diaspora. We surely cannot change the past, but what we can do is remember and do right by the people who experienced such an interesting dichotomy. The dichotomy I am talking about is an experience of struggle at the same time as experiencing strife, but in the end, we continue to strive. Thank you so much for hearing the community, and we are in support of A.B. 140. We look forward to celebrating together on June 19 as a state.

**Lawrence Weekly, Chief of Staff/Chief Diversity Officer, College of Southern Nevada:**

I am extremely honored to have this opportunity to be here this morning. As you all have heard from Ms. Berna Rhodes-Ford, and you will hear from others that will tell you, in the twenty-first century we are still saying "the first." I can go on by saying I am the first, you know, who represented Ward 5 as a city councilman in the City of Las Vegas, or I can say that I was the first African American to chair the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority Board of Directors for four years. You know, we can go on to talk about our firsts, but let me begin by just saying how honored I am, and how blessed I am and I am getting a little emotional, Madam Chair, when I think about the number of shoulders that I am standing on and the shoulders that the sponsors are standing on of those who have come before us. What a way to pay tribute. What a way to show that we are one Nevada.

I remember when I was selected to become a county commissioner, and I remember the Governor at that particular time said to me, "Lawrence, as a native Nevadan, I hope that you continue to fight to show that it is not about the north, it is not about the south; we are one Nevada." I appeal to you all today on behalf of A.B. 140. Please offer your support. What a way to pay tribute to those who have come before us, Madam Chair.

**Chair Torres:**

I am going to come back here to Carson City for testimony.

**Lilith Baran, Policy Manager, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada:**

I am so proud to be here today with my favorite person, my son. I felt it was important to pull him out of school for this very important day, and his teachers enthusiastically agreed. As you know, I am with the ACLU of Nevada. We are constantly learning about the disparities and inequities that affect the Black community, as recently as the Durango High School incident, with students who were racially profiled and harmed, and we see it in

housing. We see it in health care. We see it in every nook and cranny of our system. What we do not take enough time to do is to jubilantly celebrate this incredibly resilient community, and I am so grateful to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of it alongside my son, who has never known a childhood without Juneteenth as I did.

**Oliver Welsch, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:**

I come to you here today as an eighth grader, 13 years old, and a proud member of the ACLU. The passing of this bill would celebrate a part of my heritage and my culture that I am extremely proud of, and I am very glad that, unlike so many others, I have a childhood that is filled with a celebration of who I am. Passing this bill would only make that possible for more people.

**Chair Torres:**

I want to thank Ms. Baran and thank you, Mr. Welsch, for joining us here in the Assembly Government Affairs Committee. As an educator myself, I must agree this definitely meets a ton of standards. I really do appreciate your taking the time to come testify. This is your Committee. This is your House.

**Will Rucker, Co-Leader, Compassionate Las Vegas:**

I am also very inspired. In the fifth grade I was asked, at my predominantly white school, to present on Kwanzaa because no one had ever heard of it and my family celebrated it. Now I am here inspired to support A.B. 140 and the Juneteenth legal holiday. I represent Compassionate Las Vegas, and we are a network that has states and countries that are a part of our support. One of our leaders, Karen Armstrong, says "A compassionate city is an uncomfortable city." Senator Spearman's remarks of, "If we are truly to be compassionate people, sometimes we have to be a little uncomfortable." Talking about this still, for some, is uncomfortable, but I am so proud to see the smiles on your faces as the Committee, to see so many amazing testimonies, and to offer my personal support of A.B. 140.

**A'Esha Goins, representing Las Vegas Branch No. 1111, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:**

We urge you to support A.B. 140. To be honest, I was not prepared to testify, and I appreciate being urged to do so. As we move into the work that the Las Vegas NAACP is going to do, it is imperative that Juneteenth as a state holiday is one of those pillars. We urge you to support, and we appreciate it. It is an honor to be here.

**Chair Torres:**

Is there anyone else wishing to testify in Las Vegas?

**Willie Williams, State Director, Juneteenth Nebraska; and Juneteenth New Mexico:**

I support this bill. I support Juneteenth. I am sitting here with tears rolling because of all the years of our work and the years of trying to educate the community and legislature. This fills my heart and I support this bill.

**Chair Torres:**

We will come back up here to Carson City for testimony.

**Ashley Dodson, Co-President, Cannabis Equity and Inclusion Community, Las Vegas:**

I am here in support of A.B. 140. I am also the mother of five children who attend the Clark County School District. As a student, I did not have the pleasure to learn in my youth about Juneteenth. I was a student of Pat Diskin Elementary School, Grant Sawyer Middle School, and Advanced Technologies Academy. I believe this will be one of the most honorable gestures and recognition of our Black and African-American Nevadans to celebrate on June 19 as a legal holiday. Thank you to our dignitaries and all those in support. I would strongly urge you to support A.B. 140.

**Jo Cato, Board Member, African Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Las Vegas:**

I am here representing the African Chamber of Commerce. Our organization is made up of immigrants like me, and most of us have children that are first-generation African Americans. We are in support of this bill because it will help us as immigrants to understand the history of the United States, and it helps us to be better parents for the children who are in the Clark County School District. I would ask you, the Committee, to please vote for this bill.

**Amy Koo, Political Director, One APIA Nevada:**

We recognize the importance of recognizing holidays like Juneteenth to understand our country's accurate history. Like many communities of color, the Asian community and the Black community in the United States have so often been invisible when it comes to being taught in school the real history of our communities in this country and dismantling the institutional racism that impacts us all. Recognizing Juneteenth is just the first step to fill in these gaps in history. And we fully support the passage of A.B. 140.

**Chair Torres:**

We will now hear testimony in opposition of A.B. 140. Is there anybody wishing to testify in opposition of A.B. 140 here in Carson City? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition of a A.B. 140 in Las Vegas? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone wishing to testify in opposition of A.B. 140? [There was no one.]

Is there anyone wishing to testify in neutral to A.B. 140 in Carson City or Las Vegas? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone wishing to testify in neutral of A.B. 140? At this time, we will go ahead and invite the sponsors to come up to make any additional remarks.

**Assemblywoman Thomas:**

Today has been one of the most emotional days that I have spent in a very long time. I am so grateful for the amount of support that has come forward for A.B. 140. When I heard how we are standing on shoulders of people that have gone before us, I am so very touched that this Committee was able to see the outpouring of support throughout the state of Nevada. Please take in everything that you heard today because it really is important for us to go

forward with this monumental day of reckoning for Juneteenth, a celebration of freedom for all Americans, and we are Americans. All of us. Thank you.

**Senator Spearman:**

I just want to pay homage again to our ancestors. I was sitting during the testimonies and thought about the fact that I was able to retire as a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army. My dad left the United States Navy after his first tour. He had graduated from Tuskegee Institute with a degree in electricity, but when he joined the Navy, he was assigned as a cook and told he could go no further. We do stand on the backs and the shoulders, and I intentionally said backs and the shoulders of those who have gone before us. I am honored to be here at this time and honored to support this bill and urge your support as well.

**Chair Torres:**

I want to thank the bill's sponsors for coming to present this bill today. We will now close the hearing on A.B. 140.

At this time, we will now invite the public to come up for public comment. [Public comment was heard.]

The meeting is adjourned [at 10:29 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Diane Abbott  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

---

Assemblywoman Selena Torres, Chair

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

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Department of Administration, Purchasing Division," dated February 16, 2023, presented by Kevin D. Doty, Administrator, Purchasing Division, Department of Administration.

[Exhibit D](#) is a copy of an email dated February 14, 2023, signed by Jack Robb, Director, Department of Administration, requesting [Assembly Bill 26](#) be pulled for further consideration.

[Exhibit E](#) is a letter, dated February 15, 2023, submitted by Jyoti Chopra, Chief People, Inclusion, and Sustainability Officer, MGM Resorts International, in support of [Assembly Bill 140](#).