

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

**Eighty-Second Session
April 27, 2023**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Selena Torres at 9:02 a.m. on Thursday, April 27, 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.

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 Richard McArthur
Assemblyman Duy Nguyen
Assemblywoman Angie Taylor
Assemblywoman Clara Thomas

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Ruedy, Committee Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Committee Counsel
Sarah Delap, Committee Counsel

Minutes ID: 944



Judi Bishop, Committee Manager
Lindsey Howell, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Miguel Gonzales, Director, AmeriCorps and Recreation Programs, Walker Basin Conservancy
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League
Zoë Houghton, representing United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra
Leslie Mix, Business Relations Specialist, Sierra Nevada Job Corps, U.S. Department of Labor
Oscar Lopez, Career Transitions Specialist, Sierra Nevada Job Corps, U.S. Department of Labor
Jazmyne Hall, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Zanny Marsh, Executive Director, Nevada Volunteers
Suzanne Groneman, Sustainability Manager, City of Reno
Marco N. Velotta, Planning Project Manager, Office of Sustainability, Department of Community Development, City of Las Vegas
Joanna Jacob, Manager, Government Affairs, Clark County
Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Jaina Moan, External Affairs Director, The Nature Conservancy
Barry Cole, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Elyse Monroy-Marsala, representing Nevada Public Health Association
Leann McAllister, Executive Director, Nevada Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Janet Carter, Secretary, Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club

Chair Torres:

[Roll was taken. Committee protocol was reviewed.] Welcome to the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs, the hardest-working committee in the Nevada Legislature. I see some colleagues here shaking their head in approval, because they recognize this is indeed the hardest-working committee. We do not lie on the record.

As a note for members of the public, presenters, and Committee members, we will be taking a recess for about 10 or 15 minutes at 9:25 a.m. We ask that you please not go far. We have staff photos today, and I want to give the opportunity for staff to be in those. I think we will have more than enough time to get through the pieces of legislation we have here today. At this time, we will open the hearing on Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint).

**Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to state employment.
(BDR 23-343)**

Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15:

It is my pleasure to present Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint) for your consideration today. Please bear with me if I am a little lethargic or make any mistakes. The Committee on Ways and Means had a five-hour meeting that started at 6 p.m. last night. It is a pleasure to be in front of your hardworking Committee today.

Chair Torres:

Assemblyman Watts, what I take from that is you are a twinge jealous you are not a part of the hardest-working committee in the state Legislature. We appreciate your hard work in the Assembly Government Affairs Committee.

Assemblyman Watts:

Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint) was one of the recommendations that came out of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources, which I had the pleasure of chairing during the last interim. The issue that came up during one of those meetings was there was a discrepancy between federal law and state law in providing pathways into public service for those completing community service through programs such as AmeriCorps and Job Corps, particularly folks who are involved in doing conservation work through various public service programs.

In the federal government there are a variety of programs, some directly for AmeriCorps and others through a public land conservation corps that covers several different entities. Folks who have completed a term of service are given noncompetitive hiring status. They are able to enter into relevant positions within, for example, the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management to further their careers and enter service in the federal government. We do not have similar provisions in state government to allow those folks to transition from those terms of service into state parks, our State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, our state Division of Forestry, and so forth.

Additionally, we have AmeriCorps participants who also work in health care and other sectors. These tend to be younger people who we are hoping to get transitioned into entry-level positions in our state government. They have a commitment and a passion for public service. We want to be able to harness that in order to hopefully get them to put those talents to use in a long and successful career serving the state of Nevada. That is what Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint) aims to do. You can see it is a fairly short bill.

What we are doing is creating that noncompetitive status; the person has to meet the position's qualifications so there is no undermining of the qualifications posted for that position. They have to have successfully completed at least 900 hours of service in an AmeriCorps, Youth Conservation Corps, or Job Corps program in this state. There is a two-year time window, because we want this to be a pathway from that public service

program into state service. If it has been a long time and they are perhaps further along in their career, we do not want this to be used to circumvent the hiring processes we have. The goal is, within two years of completing that, they can enter into state service.

In working with AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] and some other stakeholders, we wanted to make sure it was clear that the duties they completed during these service programs have to be related to the job duties of the position they are applying for in state service—again, making sure we are preserving some aspects of our merit-based employment system here in the state and not unintentionally creating any sort of loophole.

That is what the bill is intended to do. I would like to turn it over to my copresenter with the Walker Basin Conservancy, which is the organization that brought this forward, to provide a little bit of background on what they have noticed and why they feel this legislation is important.

Miguel Gonzales, Director, AmeriCorps and Recreation Programs, Walker Basin Conservancy:

Yes, we brought this forward. We run an AmeriCorps program that brings opportunities into the state, especially in the Walker Basin area, which is in Mineral County and Lyon County, Nevada—a more rural part of the state. It gives the members a chance to learn a bit about different natural resources careers and environmental education careers and contribute back to the state. We do a lot of work with the Walker River State Recreation Area down there.

I have a long history of working with AmeriCorps programs and Youth Conservation Corps programs through my career. I have seen the benefits of federal hiring programs like the Public Lands Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America], and the Direct Hiring Authority for AmeriCorps members and their ability to transition into federal employment. I have always thought it was a bit lacking that the state did not have the same one. It is a missed opportunity there. This bill creates a benefit for the AmeriCorps members to have that direct pathway to state employment, just like federal employment. It also creates a benefit for the state in that it is a recruiting and retention tool. We are already bringing these folks into these programs. We are helping train them up and getting them experience in these career pathways. Right now, there is just a pathway for them to the federal hiring authority, which a lot of them do take advantage of, and no direct pathway to state employment. I think this would close that gap, get state employment at a more similar level, and help recruit people into state service as well as federal service.

It is a benefit for programs here in Nevada as well. We do employ a lot of folks in Nevada. We also bring folks from outside Nevada here to be in these programs and learn. If programs in Nevada are already trying to recruit people, it is a recruiting tool we can use as well as another way we can bring those folks into the state and keep them here, rather than having them leave for federal service elsewhere or to work in other, larger states' conservation and natural resources programs. That is the genesis of it and why I thought it was important. We brought it up to Assemblyman Watts.

Assemblyman Watts:

That concludes our presentation. We are glad to answer any questions members of the Committee may have.

Chair Torres:

I know I have a couple of members with questions.

Assemblyman Carter:

When I was reading the bill, it gave me a little twinge of nostalgia and a little twinge of disillusionment—remembering disillusionment. I personally worked in 1980 cutting firebreaks for the Youth Conservation Corps up in the Spring Mountains, until Reagan decided to use it as one of his opening shots against the working-class citizens of America by eliminating that program. It was very nice to see it was back in place. What I am looking at is, how far back will it look in terms of experience? Would I get not preferential treatment, but acknowledgment of my service, if I did that clear back in 1980?

Assemblyman Watts:

That is a great question. You can see in section 1, subsection 2, it has to be "not more than 2 years before the person applies for the position" While I appreciate your service and want to recognize that, again, one of the issues when we are providing this noncompetitive pathway is, we want to make sure it is more for entry-levels. The potential consequence, if we do not have a guardrail like that in place, is you can go on and build a successful career, and then you could use your time in the Youth Conservation Corps to try to enter state service without competing against potentially other state employees who have put in a lot of time. Then you could jump into mid- to upper-level positions. We do not want to say you cannot do it, but you should compete. That is why we put in "2 years" and that the service you complete has to be related to the position you are applying for so we avoid potentially putting our long-serving state employees at a disadvantage. That is something we want to avoid.

Assemblyman Carter:

I am personally a twinge disappointed, but I am actually greatly encouraged that the appropriate guardrails are put in place.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I appreciate your diligence and your bringing legislation that will allow someone who has been in service to our community to get pay at the level they should. I have this twinge inside me, so I want to make sure: We talk about mid-level and upper-level noncompetitive executive positions, but then I see the word "classified." I am not understanding. Are we talking about mid- and upper-level employment, or are we talking about classified positions?

Assemblyman Watts:

Yes, we are talking about classified positions. Of course, more of those higher-level positions tend to be in unclassified service. Job Corps in particular is a program for young people, especially for helping people who have been struggling academically, who have

economic challenges—helping them complete high school or get their GED [general education diploma] and then get job skills training. That is one of those things. They are doing service for our community throughout that program. This is now going to provide them an opportunity where we can get them into an entry-level position at, for example, the Department of Transportation or the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and they can take some of those skills they learned and put them to work in state government. While there are no age requirements within this, these programs are generally going to be taken advantage of by younger adults. These are going to lead to more entry-level positions.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

I love it.

Assemblywoman Taylor:

I have a couple of questions. I am a twinge confused on this. Are these just AmeriCorps or Job Corps students in our state?

Assemblyman Watts:

They would have to complete the service in the state. As Mr. Gonzales noted, folks may come from another state. At the time they come here and start doing their service, they might technically be a resident of another state. We are not saying they have to be a lawful resident, but they have to have completed the term of service with these organizations within the state of Nevada.

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any additional questions? It does not appear there are any, so at this time I will invite anyone wishing to testify in support of S.B. 87 (R1).

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League:

We are here in support of S.B. 87 (R1). Many environmental organizations in our state hire employees through AmeriCorps. This will help keep those workers in Nevada after their contract ends and help them get hired at important agencies like the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Department of Wildlife. This will help provide a secure, trained workforce for our conservation agencies and will help keep creating a more diverse workforce for all communities, both rural and urban. We urge your support.

Zoë Houghton, representing United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra:

We are here in support of S.B. 87 (R1). The United Way has found great success with recruiting AmeriCorps members for their successful United Readers program, which is an early literacy program to increase literacy skills in the northern Nevada region. As stated in the hearing and in testimony, this legislation will foster career pathways that will help Nevada recruit quality people and create pathways that will keep them in Nevada. We urge your support.

[[Exhibit C](#) and [Exhibit D](#) were submitted but not discussed and are included as exhibits for the hearing.]

Chair Torres:

Is there anyone else here in Carson City wishing to testify in support of S.B. 87 (R1)? I do not see any. Is there anyone in Las Vegas? It does not appear so. Is there anyone on the phone lines wishing to testify in support of S.B. 87 (R1)? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to S.B. 87 (R1)? [There was no one.] We will go on to neutral testimony. [There was none.]

I invite the sponsor up for any additional remarks.

Assemblyman Watts:

I appreciate your time and your questions today. I believe that if we pass this, it will make our state just a twinge better when it comes to providing pathways to service for folks in our state.

Chair Torres:

At this time, I will close the hearing on S.B. 87 (R1). As I mentioned earlier, I am going to move us to recess so staff can participate in the photos. We will recess [at 9:21 a.m.]. [The meeting was reconvened at 9:40 a.m.]

There was a traffic incident in Reno that prevented some support from coming in. Obviously, I recognize some people came very far so they could testify in support of the previous legislation. I understand this is out of norm, but after speaking with the presenter and because we are still here and have not opened a new hearing, out of respect for the distance, I will reopen the hearing on Senate Bill 87 (R1). I invite you all to testify in support of S.B. 87 (R1).

Leslie Mix, Business Relations Specialist, Sierra Nevada Job Corps, U.S. Department of Labor:

We wanted to be here in support of S.B. 87 (R1). With us today is one of our students and one of our former students who wanted to speak in favor of this. Sierra Nevada Job Corps offers lots of opportunities, and we would love to have some of our well-trained students be state employees. With that, I will turn it over to Oscar Lopez.

Oscar Lopez, Career Transitions Specialist, Sierra Nevada Job Corps, U.S. Department of Labor:

I joined Sierra Nevada Job Corps back in 2019, realizing it was an amazing opportunity for me to turn my life around. When I heard about S.B. 87 (R1), which opens the opportunity for future generations to work as part of the state, it gave me the opportunity to be here and speak. Job Corps has been an amazing opportunity that has opened many doors for me. I am here to speak on behalf of all our students so they can also have open opportunities in the future to possibly work for the state. It has been amazing talking to you, and I will turn it over to one of our students, Jazmyne Hall.

Jazmyne Hall, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a current student employee at Sierra Nevada Job Corps. I came from a large family of 12. I have 8 brothers and 3 sisters, so there are 12 of us. Four of those eight brothers and one of my sisters came to Job Corps. I also came to Job Corps because I had seen how with my siblings, Job Corps was a jump start to their careers. I came and got my certified nursing assistant (CNA) license so I could use that as a stepping stone to get my nursing license. After getting my CNA license, I joined our advanced career training (ACT) program. That is our college program. They pay for your college for two years. I joined the ACT program so I could pursue my future career and further my education to become a registered nurse by getting my nursing degree from Truckee Meadows Community College. That is where I am enrolled. I want to become a nurse so I can do what I love and give back to the community at the same time.

At Job Corps, I have learned so much from my training and from being the president of our center of our student body. I have enhanced my leadership skills and done countless hours of community service while serving my center as their president. I will also be taking advantage of joining the military through Job Corps. Because of this, I can give back to the community in a special way. I will be giving back to those who fought for our country, so it is very special for me. I support S.B. 87 (R1) because it would allow the state to hire highly motivated and ambitious Job Corps graduates like me.

Chair Torres:

We have a lot of former military folks in this room, so I know the question they are all wondering is, What branch of the military did you decide to join?

Jazmyne Hall:

The Army.

Chair Torres:

Do we have any Army folks in here? No? There is a twinge of sadness. They are a little jealous. They wish they had gotten you; they can see you are a great recruit. Thank you so much for your service, and thank you for joining us and coming out.

Is this your first time testifying, at least for a couple of you? Yes? We are fortunate to have you speaking in this body. This is your house, so we are excited to welcome you to it. Please reach out if there is any other legislation or policy we can work on together to advance the state of Nevada.

At this time, I do not believe there is anyone else wishing to testify in support, opposition, or neutral. I will open it up. I do not see anybody else here in Carson City. I do not see anybody else in Las Vegas. Is there anyone on the line wishing to testify at all on S.B. 87 (R1)?

Zanny Marsh, Executive Director, Nevada Volunteers:

We are the fiscal administrator for the AmeriCorps program and the Governor's Commission on Service. I am testifying today in support of S.B. 87 (R1) because of the opportunities it provides to our next generation of leaders. I am looking forward to this opportunity to provide a jump start for our youth and their career. I am really excited this legislation has come forward and we have an opportunity to share our support for this important opportunity with you.

Chair Torres:

Is there anyone else on the line? [There was no one.] I will close the hearing on S.B. 87 (R1). We will open the hearing on Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint).

Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions governing master plans. (BDR 22-346)

Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15:

It is my pleasure to present for your consideration today Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint). This bill was also recommended from the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Again, I had the pleasure of chairing that during the last interim. I am joined by Suzanne Groneman with the City of Reno. Down at the Grant Sawyer Building, we have Marco Velotta with the City of Las Vegas to assist in the presentation.

We held a joint meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources and the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Health and Human Services to explore issues where environment and health came together. One was about issues related to extreme heat. We heard presentations from different organizations. We heard about some of the efforts local governments here and in other parts of the country have taken to try to address extreme heat and mitigate its impacts on communities. Increasingly, we have seen local governments develop specific heat mitigation programs.

We have had certain aspects of that in terms of providing cooling centers and things to allow people to get some sort of refuge from the heat. Obviously, within local governments, there is a wide range of activities that could be taken on outside of just that, such as looking at building standards to facilitate shade and protection from heat, deployment of trees and shade structures, and making sure folks have access to water in addition to cooling spaces.

What we felt was best was to look at some of our master planning statutes. We have parks and recreation elements. There is an environmental element for some of our larger local jurisdictions, but we did not have a heat mitigation element. Research has shown that Las Vegas and Reno are among the fastest-warming cities in the country. We are dealing with the urban heat island effect, as well as the fact that we are already hot to begin with and have been getting hotter. This is something we want to make sure we are taking a holistic look at and work to protect our communities from these negative impacts, which can severely impact folks' health and well-being. That is what this bill seeks to do.

We also understand local governments of different sizes have different needs. In our statutes, we already have different sets of processes for our largest counties and cities. We have fewer requirements and more encouragements for some of our smaller local governments. This fits within the existing framework by having those larger municipalities include a heat mitigation element as part of their master planning process. Section 2, subsection 1, paragraph (i) adds that there has to be a heat mitigation element in these plans. That needs to include a plan to develop heat mitigation strategies, which may include things such as public cooling spaces, public drinking water, cool—or heat-reducing—building practices, shade over paved surfaces, and any other mitigation measures to address heat. "Shade" can include urban tree canopies, with a preference for native and drought-tolerant species, as well as shade structures and shelters.

At the end of the day, it is open-ended. There has to be this element. What is put in is left to the discretion of the local government. Ultimately, it is left to existing local government agencies to carry out the strategies laid out in this element. If there is something related to building practices, some of those decisions would ultimately be made by the building codes departments. This is not meant to supersede anything. It is mostly to provide a one-stop shop for how we are going to protect folks in our community from the impacts of extreme heat. That concludes my presentation. I would like to turn it over to my copresenters, and then we are glad to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Suzanne Groneman, Sustainability Manager, City of Reno:

I want to note that Reno and Las Vegas are both Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold-certified cities, two of only a handful worldwide to receive that certification. The number of days in which temperatures exceed 95 degrees in Reno is increasing. Over the last 50 years, we experienced warmer nighttime temperatures in surrounding rural areas. Urban centers are known to retain heat, which can have health impacts, impacts to energy costs, and things like that.

The current ReImagine Reno Master Plan emphasizes the importance of a healthy urban forest. In fact, the City of Reno Urban Forestry program is the oldest in the state of Nevada. It also emphasizes reducing the heat island effect through site features such as reflective materials and shade options. It also has the goal of exploring the feasibility of establishing safe centers for residents during periods of high heat. Along with our regional partners, the City of Reno's Parks and Recreation Department, Emergency Management, Development Services, Equity and Community Relations, and our sustainability team work together in strong coordination to address heat mitigation efforts.

The City of Reno must look at heat mitigation and heat management. Heat management includes cooling centers, access to reliable energy, dependable transportation, and safe housing. Under our adopted sustainability and climate action plan, safeguarding water resources is one of our priorities as well. This ensures our residents have access to clean, safe drinking water during periods of high heat. Right now, we are undergoing a mapping process where we are looking at actual heat—so it is a heat map—as well as equity indicators. There is a direct correlation between high heat areas in Reno and incidences of

asthma and other health impacts. We are excited about understanding more about that and releasing those results when that is concluded. Under this bill, heat mitigation efforts will be better defined and will emphasize looking ahead, planning now rather than reacting to existing threats. Thank you for allowing the City of Reno to participate in this discussion today.

Marco N. Velotta, Planning Project Manager, Office of Sustainability, Department of Community Development, City of Las Vegas:

Happy early Arbor Day. I am the lead planning project manager for the City of Las Vegas' 2050 Master Plan. I oversee its implementation. As mentioned by Ms. Groneman and Assemblyman Watts, Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint) provides specific direction for cities' and counties' master plans to include a heat mitigation element. I would like to share with you some of the things we have been doing in the city with respect to urban heat island effect mitigation and extreme heat in general.

When we embarked on developing our master plan, which covers the next 30 years, there were a number of objectives we wanted to hit. Among them was developing something that specifically got at sustainability and natural environment, as was considered by both the conservation and safety elements under *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 278.160. We identified a number of issues specific to the city itself, as well as the rest of the southern Nevada region—perhaps more pronounced in areas and neighborhoods around downtown Las Vegas, but impacting the region as a whole—drought, flash flooding, and extreme heat. In the Mojave Desert of southern Nevada and the Great Basin Desert across the rest of the state, of course desert heat is a geographic fact that is obviously known.

The difference we have noticed, in partnership with the other local municipalities and regional entities, is that it is exacerbated by the built environment. We have seen this in the form of the urban heat island effect, which is a common issue cities across the country have to deal with. Each of these is going to need to be addressed uniquely in their own context or with geographically specific methods. The response in Las Vegas and southern Nevada is certainly going to be different than that of Reno. The responses may be different within the 215 beltway or McCarran Boulevard versus outside. Even those efforts might be different than addressing it in the Lake Tahoe Basin, for example.

When we add other layers like demographics and socioeconomics, tree canopy coverage, building construction, and other built natural environment variables, it becomes apparent that the effect has more of an impact on the urban area and creeps across those political boundaries. In our case, we collected and overlaid those data steps, mapped them out, and immediately knew there was higher vulnerability and less capacity to adapt around downtown Las Vegas, including east Las Vegas and historic west side.

Finally, the concern is that with time and changing climatic conditions—we are also anticipating temperatures increasing 2 to 8 degrees higher than the average—the impact of the urban heat island effect on cities, neighborhoods, and local communities gets to be much worse, ranging from the financial cost to the public health toll. The 2050 plan's goals do

broadly discuss how we deal with urban heat—but given the realm of possibilities that could be involved, and without the statutory language for plan guidance, much of the plan's content is relatively high-level but lacks some of the details on how to mitigate and respond to events. Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint) would address that. For example, we would have specifics on how to maintain critical functions and how to specifically mitigate the urban heat island effect with things like cooling centers, building code adoption, monitoring areas for at-risk populations, developing better communication with vulnerable populations, and budgeting for the increased number of high-heat days.

We did outreach during a complementary special area planning effort for east Las Vegas, which will be adopted in June of this year. From that, we know that in east Las Vegas—which is 60 percent Latino with a median household income of about \$30,000—the community overwhelmingly wants to see more trees planted. We have done a lot of those tree-planting events, including one this last weekend on the Stewart Avenue corridor in east Las Vegas. We know the community wants these, and because of the older building stock, it is necessary to have these types of measures considered. Because our plan is implementation-oriented, the Las Vegas City Council has followed up with additional measures in the form of a resolution that was adopted last September. We created an urban forestry program and have our own tree nursery. We have adopted the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) regional plant list as a minimum standard for drought-tolerant trees and plant species.

We are not alone in this planning process. We have been meeting jointly with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), the county, SNWA, and academic institutions, as well as federal agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service. One of the takeaways of these efforts is how to plan and coordinate amongst ourselves given an event like the first 100-degree day that is forecast for later this week in Las Vegas. As we discussed at the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources presentations and testimony—including the city's reflected need for coordinating on this matter—S.B. 169 (R1) provisions address this component of NRS Chapter 278, which is the chapter on master plan statutes. The language addresses the urban forest shading and other strategies to allow us to better deal with the urban heat island effect.

We do have a request for proposal (RFP) that will speak directly to this element. It is closing later today. Amendment 159, which created this reprint of the bill, will provide us that additional direction for the planning process. With that, I will turn things back over to Assemblyman Watts.

Assemblyman Watts:

That concludes the presentation. We are glad to answer any questions you have.

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any questions?

Assemblyman Nguyen:

I am just a twinge excited because I am a former planning commissioner for Clark County. I thank Assemblyman Watts for the thoughtfulness around this. Not to go too in-depth in terms of the things I want to ask, but I am curious: In terms of best practices in similar high-temperature areas—for example, Arizona, our next-door neighbor—have there been any strategies around this particular priority? If I could start with that, that would be great.

Assemblyman Watts:

That is an excellent question. We actually had some presentations from The Nature Conservancy, which is involved in doing some research on impacts of extreme heat in the Phoenix area, including estimates of some of the economic impacts they see as a result. I believe the City of Phoenix was one of the leading cities in developing a specific heat mitigation strategy. I think they actually reorganized some of their city government to focus specifically on heat mitigation. I do not have enough additional background off the top of my head but can provide some of that as follow-up. The City of Las Vegas has also looked at some of that or has spoken with them. I turn it over to them, if any of my copresenters want to provide additional background on what other municipalities have been doing on this.

Marco Velotta:

Some of the other Arizona municipalities, including the City of Tempe, have stood up offices of heat mitigation. As Assemblyman Watts alluded to, they have reorganized some of their staff to address specific heat mitigation strategies, such as tree planting, concern for outdoor workers, working on building codes, and protection for specific urban areas within the Phoenix metro area. It is a best practice in some of those cities where this is happening and where the phenomenon has been observed. An element like this can certainly speak to the need for that type of collaboration in how you work with other agencies to address some of those issues.

Assemblyman Nguyen:

That brings me to my next concern in terms of the infrastructure we have. We grow really fast, and Clark County is exploding in terms of population, density, and all that good stuff. You mentioned the heat map earlier and some of the capacity currently existing. I know we want to set enabling language so the cities, counties, and municipalities can be a little more flexible in terms of how they plan this. With the state and our planning up here, we do a lot of things based on population. In terms of population minimums, have we thought about planning any type of per-population requirement? For example, per every 50,000 people in a population, there must be X number of cooling places or shelters and access. The district I represent in the southwest might have a lot of housing developments and residential areas, but access to cooling places may be far away. In terms of where we identify minimums, do we think about that at this level, or do you still want to put it down to the municipality level?

Assemblyman Watts:

I will speak specifically to where this legislation is at and then turn it over to the local governments to discuss their thoughts about potential implementation. I would say the only population considerations in this bill are that these are only required for counties and cities

within those counties with a population of 100,000 or greater. Of course we welcome any community to consider this. This would be a required aspect of master planning for counties with a population above 100,000 and any cities within them. That is the only thing considered in this legislation.

Again, we are trying to provide enough of a framework and structure to say that this needs to be a dedicated aspect that is fleshed out and thought through in conversation with all the different departments within that local government, as well as businesses, community organizations, and others in developing what this strategy and plan look like. The way I envision it is, getting into some of those nuances between different areas, we are leaving that open to be figured out at the local government level. With that, if either the City of Reno or the City of Las Vegas has anything to add, I will turn it over.

Suzanne Groneman:

One of the exercises under LEED for cities, which both Las Vegas and Reno had to go through, is access and looking at how far certain populations are from accessing community resources. We scored high there. I was not around back when we started laying out these plans, but I think it shows that Reno has taken those steps. Of course there is more we can do. A lot of our heat-mapping exercise looks at multiple impacts based on geographical location—energy burden, asthma rates, age. There are all these different factors we can look at. As we move forward with that project, I think it will inform other programs we have in the city. We have a building performance standard, and that addresses existing buildings. We are looking at how we can also grow that program so that we are addressing not only new construction but our existing building stock.

Chair Torres:

I do not know that it is necessarily specific to the bill, but I had a quick question for the City of Las Vegas. You were speaking about some of the mitigation efforts that have been done in east Las Vegas, like encouraging trees and providing those to constituents. I am just wondering what efforts have been made specific to west Las Vegas, which is where my Assembly district is. I notice that over time, we have consistently removed parks, removed trees from some of those parks, renovated them, and added sports centers, taking away some of the green space that was there. I am wondering, very specifically, what mitigation efforts are done there? What outreach to constituents is done there? I have not seen any tree event in my area. Over the last 20 years or so, the area has consistently lost some of that green space. Landlords—There are a lot of renters in the area. A lot of people in our community are low-income and are maybe not able to ensure their residences have access to those things. I am wondering what, specifically, is being done to address this issue?

Marco Velotta:

The city has recently done a lot of tree planting events across the city. Of course, the focus has been within the areas where we know the tree canopy has thinned out or reduced due to age, disease, being cut down, and so forth. We have done similar mapping exercises on the trees themselves in terms of their characteristics. As far as the western areas of Las Vegas, we do see greater tree canopy coverage. The bottom line is, we want to increase tree canopy

coverage across the city as a whole. We do have tree nurseries at our east and west yards. Tomorrow, we have a tree-planting event at Doc Romeo Park, which is one of the locations where we are going to be planting some new trees. We have had ward-based events all across the city over previous Arbor Days as part of our Tree City USA designation—Centennial Hills, Summerlin, west Las Vegas, the historic west side, east Las Vegas. We are using volunteers from the community, such as Get Outdoors Nevada and Impact NV. They have come out to plant trees along arterial streets or at parks themselves.

We have control over those spaces, and with our plan overall we are trying to plant 60,000 new trees over the next 30 years. The RFP we have out on the street right now will go even further in addressing not only the urban heat island mitigation efforts mentioned within this bill, but also inventorying our trees, our parks, and the spaces the city itself controls to increase the canopy coverage and green infrastructure benefits we are missing in some of those locations, including within your district and the wards of the northwest.

Assemblyman Watts:

Without speaking specifically to the issues you brought up for your district, one thing I wanted to put some additional context around in terms of other issues that have come before and are still before the Legislature—particularly in southern Nevada—is that we have ongoing efforts to conserve water. That has involved removing nonfunctional grass turf. I think it is important we put that out there. One of the things that has been brought up in discussion about that is the impact turf has on helping reduce the urban heat island. My hope is that the implementation of this bill will improve and accelerate some of the efforts in the City of Las Vegas and throughout Clark County that Mr. Velotta is talking about.

It is also important specifically within that context, because grass does provide a cooling benefit. However, so do drought-tolerant shade trees. It is important that we do not just take out one but put in the other—that we think about these other opportunities to provide shade. There was a study done recently. I believe this was in an Arizona area. The Desert Research Institute did this study and found that a very lush, water-intensive landscaping does provide more cooling benefits than a drought-adapted landscape. But the crucial thing is, if you have a building or other thing that provides full-on shade protection, that provides the exact same level of protection and heat reduction that a lush landscape does while using zero water. That is why in redevelopment and other things, it is also important to think about how we are building and what we are building with. Those things can have a substantial impact.

The goal is that these heat mitigation elements and master plans will bring all those things together. With some of these considerations about access and equity, we want to ensure that for the turf spaces that will remain—which are parks—we have park access for different communities and are looking to increase that in areas where it is less prevalent. We want to ensure we are increasing tree canopy, specifically focusing on those neighborhoods and areas where that is less prevalent and looking at improving shade access in those communities as well.

Chair Torres:

To be very specific, I am very frustrated because we recently renovated the Charleston Heights Park in Assembly District 3. I know it has a new name. I think it is the Becker esports center. There were large trees there that provided shade. When I spoke with the city, my understanding was that one of the reasons we removed some of that was because they were being used by people who do not have a home. They were sleeping there and using those bathrooms. Instead, we remove the trees that were providing shade to the area. The only parks in that area now have no trees, and there is grass but not shade.

We removed these large trees that were already in the area. I think there are maybe two left of dozens of trees there. It was well used by the community. I wonder if this piece of legislation addresses renovations, new construction, and ensuring that becomes a part of the conversation, because I would hate to continue to see this be a pattern. I am very frustrated because I know that park is used by my community. I also know this park is one of the few parks in the area. We are surrounded by families who are barely making ends meet. Those students, those children, do not have the opportunities to go to parks that are better shaded. I am wondering if you can speak directly to whether or not this will require them to address that specific concern as they are renovating or making those plans.

Assemblyman Watts:

That is certainly the intent with this legislation. By requiring this holistic approach to addressing these issues in the conservation element, we have started to see increasing emphasis on trees and urban forestry. We want to make sure we combine that with other things around access to shade. We want to make sure that if it gets extremely hot and people are struggling to pay their energy bills, or are unhoused, or if for some reason we have a disruption in the energy system, there are resiliencies built in that are accessible and will keep people protected from the impacts of heat. My sincere hope is that in going through that exercise, the mapping that has been discussed will be done. It will be improved and refined, and the efforts will be focused on the communities that are most in need, such as the one you described in your district.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

My question has to do with the walkability bill that was passed in 2021, which would do the things I believe Clark County is requesting. I want to know if Clark County and Reno are working with RTC to implement the trees and the shade, because that is what the walkability bill wanted to do as well.

Assemblyman Watts:

I am going to phone a friend, because we do have Clark County here.

Chair Torres:

I know Ms. Joanna Jacob comes just because she cannot wait to answer those questions.

Joanna Jacob, Manager, Government Affairs, Clark County:

We did work with Assemblyman Watts and Senator Doñate on this bill on the Senate side. After passage of that bill last session, as a regional effort RTC is really the lead on that walkability study. Mr. Velotta mentioned in his testimony that we are working together with the cities. We did a climate vulnerability assessment on behalf of our community, which included implementation and pieces of that bill. We are working to address it in a regional way.

That climate vulnerability assessment working group involves Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas, Clark County, and some of our private sector, such as NV Energy—all the partners we have—and also the Desert Research Institute. The group thinks about what we as a community can do as a whole to address heat mitigation. That does include, as Assemblyman Watts noted, increasing shade structures. In the short-term, for example, there are cooling centers—are they distributed equitably in our community?—and strategies that way. When you see the language in this bill, that was a little more permissive about what other things the local governments can do. It is designed to help us address that issue. The Regional Transportation Commission is in that working group as well. We are working on it.

Assemblyman Watts:

I would say that in short, the goal is to build upon, strengthen the language, and complement that legislation because walkability is certainly important. There are a lot of benefits to that. This would support that by making sure people have the shade and comfort needed to walk to areas. Some of these potential concepts, including how we build, could also further support walkability. I think it integrates into and does not necessarily duplicate, but strengthens, some of the goals of that policy.

Chair Torres:

Members, are there any additional questions? It does not appear there are any. At this time, I will invite anyone wishing to testify in support of S.B. 169 (R1).

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League:

We are here in support of S.B. 169 (R1). Nevada is home to two of the fastest-warming cities in the country: Las Vegas and Reno. The typical number of heat waves in Nevada is projected to increase even more to around 55 days a year by 2050. Extreme heat events can be dangerous to health, even fatal. The number of heat-related deaths and illnesses continues to increase year by year. Nevada is the highest-rated state in the country for heat-related deaths per capita, with 4.54 deaths per 100,000 residents. This is far higher than the U.S. average of 0.35 deaths per 100,000 residents. While all Nevadans are impacted during these extreme heat events, impacts are not evenly distributed. Extreme heat poses higher risks to low-income communities and communities of color, as the effects of urban heat islands make temperatures in these neighborhoods far warmer. This problem will only continue to get worse if we do not take action. It is critical that local governments proactively address extreme heat and mitigate its impacts to protect public health and our communities. We urge the Committee's support.

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

[Reading from [Exhibit E](#).] I am here in support of Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint). The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada believes everyone has the right to live in a clean and healthy environment regardless of their race, income, or where in the state they live. Yet in a study done by NPR [National Public Radio] and the University of Maryland's Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, they found, "In dozens of major U.S. cities, low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be hotter than their wealthier counterparts" These low-income communities and communities of color are facing disproportionate impacts from extreme heat and urban heat islands.

According to Climate Central, the top two greatest increases in summer temperatures in the nation since 1970 were Reno, with 10.9 degrees Fahrenheit, and Las Vegas, with 5.8 degrees Fahrenheit. However, these trends can be seen statewide, with many parts of the state experiencing at least 30 days a year at 95 degrees or higher. These extremely high temperatures pose a danger to human life, physical and mental health, transportation and power infrastructure, and ecosystems. Much of Nevada will continue to grow hotter and more fire-prone. Investing in resilience-enhancing infrastructure such as cooling spaces, public drinking water, shade, and urban tree canopies in the most impacted communities can make Nevada stronger in the face of a changing climate. We urge your support.

Jaina Moan, External Affairs Director, The Nature Conservancy:

The Nature Conservancy supports Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint) to require heat mitigation strategies and master plans. In our testimony, we also note that research conducted by Climate Central shows that Las Vegas and Reno are two of the fastest-warming cities in the nation. This is consistently the case. Planning for extreme heat and finding ways to reduce and mitigate adverse effects are essential for maintaining our quality of life in our rapidly warming cities. Additionally, it is an opportunity to address areas that need the heat mitigation the most. There are many innovative ways to deploy nature-based solutions to cool areas affected by urban heating. We appreciate that urban tree canopies are included in the mitigation strategies mentioned in the bill. Other community greening efforts such as low-water landscaping and community or personal gardens can also have a cooling effect in underserved neighborhoods that are most impacted by heat.

Joanna Jacob:

I came up to the table earlier to note we are partnering with many of our cities and entities in southern Nevada to address heat mitigation. We appreciate the work that was done on the Senate side to give us a little more flexibility about strategies we can look to. We also appreciate the addition of drought-tolerant trees because that is an important issue in southern Nevada. I wanted to thank Assemblyman Watts for his work and partnership with us so we could get to a position of support.

Barry Cole, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

Today I represent Nevada Clinicians for Climate Action, the physicians, nurses, and health care people who are very concerned about what is going on in the climate—not so much about warming per se but the climate in general. There is a nuance. Do you have seasonal

allergies? If you do, you probably take an antihistamine that actually interferes with your sweating ability, so you are now more vulnerable to a heat experience. As a psychiatrist, I prescribe antidepressants and antipsychotic meds. Both of these have interference effects on your temperature regulation ability. The most notorious would be the antipsychotics, which actually knock out your brain stem's normal regulation of body temperature. You become de facto more susceptible to heat. However, I have also seen the reverse where people have frozen to death in the winter. As a clinician, physician, and psychiatrist in Nevada, I urge your support for S.B. 169 (R1).

Elyse Monroy-Marsala, representing Nevada Public Health Association:

The American Public Health Association (APHA) published a report called *Climate Change, Health, and Inequity: A Guide for Local Health Departments*. This comprehensive, 376-page report, which I will read into the record—just kidding—outlined steps public health departments should take to do their part to address climate change. I wanted to share a couple of highlights from this report.

The report notes that climate change and health inequities are the defining public health issue of our time, and they are inextricably interconnected. We know climate change disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color. Climate change and health inequities share the same root cause, and it is broken systems. Finally, addressing climate change and health inequities requires transformative change in our systems and communities. Master plans guide and dictate how our communities grow, are built, and develop. Ensuring our local planners are being mindful of heat mitigation is a great step towards transforming some of these broken systems.

To read from the APHA report: We must ensure all people have opportunities for health, but that requires that we preserve a healthy planet. "We cannot have healthy people without healthy places, and we cannot have healthy places without a healthy planet." The Nevada Public Health Association urges your support of this bill.

Chair Torres:

Is there anyone else here in Carson City wishing to testify in support of S.B. 169 (R1)? I do not see anyone here in Carson City. Is there anyone in Las Vegas? It does not look like we have anyone in Las Vegas coming forward right now to support S.B. 169 (R1). Is there anyone on the line wishing to support S.B. 169 (R1).

Leann McAllister, Executive Director, Nevada Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics:

I am in support of S.B. 169 (R1). The public health consequences of heat-temperature extremes are substantial. Because of their unique physiology, children are more susceptible to temperature extremes and their health effects. We thank you for addressing heat mitigation, and we support this bill.

Janet Carter, Secretary, Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club:

The Sierra Club is the world's largest environmental volunteer organization, with more than 30,000 members and supporters statewide. We are speaking in support of S.B. 169 (R1). I do not need to repeat everything that has been said. We know the urban communities in the state of Nevada are warming at an alarming rate, and that Las Vegas and Reno have been particularly hard-hit with heat issues. It is critical that we admit the reality and do everything we can to respond to it. These are sensible, commonsense strategies, such as cooling spaces, the availability of public drinking water, shade over paved areas, and urban tree canopies. All of these will help incorporate heat mitigation into urban planning. We support it strongly, and we urge you to support the bill.

[[Exhibit F](#) and [Exhibit G](#) were submitted but not discussed and are included as exhibits for the hearing.]

Chair Torres:

Is there anyone else on the line in support? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to S.B. 169 (R1)? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify in neutral on S.B. 169 (R1)? [There was no one.]

I will invite the bill sponsor up for any closing remarks.

Assemblyman Watts:

Thank you for your thoughtful questions and for sharing a twinge of your time with me today.

Chair Torres:

With a twinge of excitement, the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs is going to close the hearing on S.B. 169 (R1). We will move on to public comment. [There was none.]

Are there any closing remarks from Committee members? Assemblyman McArthur, it looks like you had something to add. No? Our colleague, Assemblyman McArthur, is a little exhausted from yesterday's party. It was well attended. The man of the week is about to turn 20 for the fourth time, and he is quite excited.

As a reminder to Committee members, we will be meeting tomorrow at 9 a.m. At this time, the meeting is adjourned [at 10:35 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Lindsey Howell
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 letter dated April 26, 2023, submitted by Kaira Esgate, Chief Executive Officer, America's Service Commissions, in support of Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint).

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter dated April 27, 2023, submitted by Rocky Flanary, Center Director, Sierra Nevada Job Corps Center, U.S. Department of Labor, in support of Senate Bill 87 (1st Reprint).

[Exhibit E](#) is a letter dated April 27, 2023, submitted by Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, in support of Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint).

[Exhibit F](#) is a letter dated April 26, 2023, submitted by Debra Hendrickson, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada, in support of Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint).

[Exhibit G](#) is a letter dated April 26, 2023, submitted by Estefany Carrasco-González, National Director, Chispa Nevada, in support of Senate Bill 169 (1st Reprint).