

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

**Eighty-Second Session  
February 14, 2023**

The joint meeting of the Assembly Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections and the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair Michelle Gorelow at 4:02 p.m. on Tuesday, February 14, 2023, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 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).

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow, Chair  
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Rich DeLong  
Assemblywoman Jill Dickman  
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva  
Assemblywoman Cecelia González  
Assemblyman Richard McArthur  
Assemblyman Brian Hibbetts  
Assemblyman Cameron (C.H.) Miller  
Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno  
Assemblywoman Sabra Newby  
Assemblyman Steve Yeager

**SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair  
Senator Skip Daly, Vice Chair  
Senator Lisa Krasner

**SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro (excused)  
Senator Heidi Seevers Gansert (excused)



**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Haley Proehl, Committee Policy Analyst  
Bryan Fernley, Committee Counsel  
Jeff Koelemay, Committee Counsel  
Shuruk Ismael, Committee Manager  
Kristi Howard, Committee Secretary  
Terry Horgan, Committee Secretary  
Diane Rea, Committee Secretary  
Barbara Young, Committee Secretary  
Garrett Kingen, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Kandice Townsend, Government Affairs Specialist, City of North Las Vegas  
Jimmy Lau, representing Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican  
Christine Saunders, Policy Director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada  
Annette Magnus, Executive Director, Battle Born Progress  
John J. Piro, Chief Deputy Public Defender, Legislative Liaison, Clark County Public  
Defender's Office  
Erica Roth, Government Affairs Liaison, Deputy Public Defender, Washoe County  
Public Defender's Office  
Nicholas Shepack, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada  
Leisa Moseley, representing Clark County Black Caucus  
Lilith Baran, Policy Manager, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada  
Jim Hoffman, representing Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice  
Jodi Hocking, Founder/Executive Director, Return Strong!, Carson City, Nevada  
Quentin Savvoir, President, Las Vegas Branch, National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People  
Alfred Gourrier, President, Samuel L. Smith Educational Foundation  
Yesenia Moya, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Mercedes Maharis, Member, Nevada Silver Haired Legislative Forum  
Lorena Portillo, Assistant Registrar of Voters, Election Department, Clark County  
Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission  
William "Scott" Hoen, Clerk-Recorder, Carson City  
Amy Burgans, Clerk-Treasurer, Douglas County  
Tami Rae Spero, County Clerk, Humboldt County  
Jamie Rodriguez, Registrar of Voters, Washoe County

**Chair Gorelow:**

[Roll was called. Committee rules and protocol were reviewed.] Welcome to the second joint meeting of the Assembly and Senate Committees on Legislative Operations and Elections. Today we will hear presentations from the Nevada Indian Commission, various county election officials, and Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session. I am going to take a few items out of order today due to some scheduling conflicts. I will now open the hearing on Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session. Please go ahead when you are ready, Assemblyman Watts.

**Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session: Proposes to amend the Ordinance of the Nevada Constitution and the Nevada Constitution to remove language authorizing the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as a criminal punishment. (BDR C-496)**

**Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15:**

Thank you, Chair and members of the Committees. It is my honor to present Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session, which will fully ban slavery and involuntary servitude in the state of Nevada.

I will keep my remarks brief and try to respect both the members who heard and voted for this measure last session as well as those who are new to the Committees and the Legislature.

Some may be wondering why we are discussing slavery at all. Did the Thirteenth Amendment to the *United States Constitution* not abolish this practice? Not quite. The actual language of the amendment is: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

That exception allows involuntary servitude to be administered as a punishment for crimes, with no further guidance other than the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

The language originated with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which led to the creation of the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. All but Illinois put this language in their state constitutions, and the practice continued as additional free states joined the Union. It also occurred as former Confederate states entered Reconstruction following the end of the Civil War. Nevada enshrined slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for crimes in our own state constitution, and it has remained in our foundational document for more than 155 years.

*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, by author Michelle Alexander, and the 2016 documentary film *13th*, by Ava DuVernay, explored the ways that criminal justice in America transformed in reaction to the exemption clause in the Thirteenth Amendment, starting in the U.S. South following the Civil War, but later

extending across the country. New petty offenses were created and enforced that specifically targeted Black citizens, often referred to as the "black codes." For offenses such as vagrancy or failure to pay a tax or fine, hard labor was required.

This practice led to chain gangs and convict leasing, whereby both state governments and private enterprises profited from free and forced labor of primarily Black men after the supposed end of slavery. Conditions were brutal and inhumane; thousands of Black prisoners were literally worked to death.

To this day, the higher rates of policing, arrest, prosecution, and incarceration for communities of color and the subminimum wages for prison labor are considered collateral consequences and direct legacies of these creative efforts to maintain the social and economic structures of slavery following the end of the Civil War.

Let us be clear that we are talking about the designation of human beings as the personal property of others, denying their most basic human rights. The loss of all liberty, and labor being compelled without compensation. People beaten, abused, or killed without consequence. It is time for us to move forward and make clear unequivocally that nobody will ever live the horror of state-sanctioned slavery or servitude ever again.

Twenty-four states, about half, had some form of ban on slavery in their constitutions with an exemption for criminal punishment; the other half have no mention and are subject to the ban and exemption in the Thirteenth Amendment. Rhode Island was the only state to adopt an unconditional ban on slavery in 1842. However, in 2018 Colorado became the first state to change its existing constitutional language to completely ban slavery and involuntary servitude. In 2020 Utah and Nebraska voters overwhelmingly passed measures to do the same, and in 2022 Vermont, Oregon, Alabama, and Tennessee did the same. Now it is Nevada's chance to lead and do the same.

The text of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session is simple. It removes from the Ordinance and Article 1 of the *Nevada Constitution* the clause allowing for slavery as a punishment for crimes. This measure passed with unanimous support during the 81st Session and once passed again this session, it will head to a vote of the people in 2024.

As the great-great-grandson of Coleman Watts, who was born enslaved in the United States, and on behalf of the entire Nevada Black Legislative Caucus, I urge your support for A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session and I am glad to answer any questions the Committees may have.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Thank you very much, Assemblyman Watts. Committee members, do we have any questions or comments? [There were none.] We will now hear testimony in support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session.

**Kandice Townsend, Government Affairs Specialist, City of North Las Vegas:**

I am here to read a letter [\[Exhibit C\]](#) into the record on behalf of Mayor Goynes-Brown:

My name is Pamela Goynes-Brown, Mayor of the City of North Las Vegas and on behalf of the City, I am proudly testifying in support of AJR10. No longer should slavery of any form still exist in our society today and AJR10 will finally undo this wrong in the state of Nevada. I proudly shared my support for AJR10 during the 2021 Legislative Session and continue to do so now as we take one step closer to finally removing involuntary servitude in all its forms from our Nevada State Constitution. It is time for this resolution to go in front of Nevada voters, and I ask again, just like in 2021, for the Legislature to unanimously support AJR10 to right this injustice that has long disproportionately affected the black community and allowed many to be exploited for free labor. Nevada, for all its trials and tribulations throughout its short history, especially in its treatment of communities of color, has the opportunity to take a historic step forward on progress and I am proud to support this landmark change to our state constitution. I appreciate the multiple sponsors of this Resolution for bringing it forward and making this long overdue change possible. Thank you members of the committee for your time and consideration of this important matter. I once again urge you to move quickly in passing AJR10.

**Jimmy Lau, representing Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican:**

St. Rose was supportive of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session and is here to continue that support today.

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

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada supports A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. First, we want to thank Assemblyman Watts for bringing forth this important piece of legislation. The *Nevada Constitution* is our state's guiding document and agreement of how we will interact with each other, our shared values, and a symbol of our shared ideals. This language in our *Constitution* is not the Nevada we want to be. These past few years with the global pandemic and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement have created a watershed moment for change in our nation. Thousands of Nevadans have taken to the streets, to the Legislature, and to the ballot box to demand an end to the ways in which our institutions perpetuate systemic racism. Nevadans are looking for the state to do what is right. We must act to remove this outdated language from our state *Constitution*. We urge your support.

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

I am here in support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. The name "Battle Born" comes from being born a proud Nevadan. I grew up knowing our history as a Union state during the Civil War. Knowing that these terms and this language are still in our state *Constitution* is disturbing to me based on that very history. We must update this offensive language. We believe that slavery and involuntary servitude have no place in the *Nevada Constitution*.

A person convicted of a crime may be in prison and incarcerated, but nobody should ever be enslaved or forced into involuntary servitude. Support our communities across the state and remove slavery and involuntary servitude completely from the *Nevada Constitution*. Words matter. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

**John J. Piro, Chief Deputy Public Defender, Legislative Liaison, Clark County Public Defender's Office:**

Truth and reconciliation are sequential. Before you can hit reconciliation, you must have truth. In order to get to the truth, we need to remove this offensive black eye from both our country's eye and this state's eye. We urge your support of this bill moving forward so that we can remove some of the most offensive history from our nation and from the state out of our state *Constitution*.

**Erica Roth, Government Affairs Liaison, Deputy Public Defender, Washoe County Public Defender's Office:**

I am here to testify in support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. As a dedicated public defender, I see the legacy of slavery as it permeates the criminal legal system today. This is a necessary step to begin to right that wrong and work towards a more just system for all of us.

**Nicholas Shepack, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:**

I have had the honor of working with this body for multiple sessions now to improve conditions within the Department of Corrections. Words matter deeply, and when we are looking at how we move forward collectively, it is paramount that the language in our *Constitution* reflects the values of this state. I urge you all to unanimously pass this resolution again.

**Leisa Moseley, representing Clark County Black Caucus:**

As an organization that advocates for policies that positively impact the African-American community, we rise in support of this bill. It is time that Nevada removed this harmful language from our *Constitution*.

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

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Nevada is in full support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. We would like to thank this body for bringing it forward. The ACLU remains the nation's premier organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights and civil liberties. This resolution will help directly address an issue that is critical to our organization: the abusive conditions in Nevada's prisons through the continued perpetuation of slavery of incarcerated people. Currently, we are litigating a few issues related to conditions directly tied towards women who have been forced into dangerous and deadly scenarios as prison laborers. The deprivation of liberty should not inherently mean the perpetuation of slavery, but that is in fact where we are. The racial components underlying this issue are illustrative of the part of the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow-era policies. There is no basis to continue to enslave any human being. Reconciling with this harmful past is the path forward and the ethical and meaningful solution towards needed improvements in the Department of

Corrections. This is a necessary step toward rejecting slavery in all forms. The ACLU of Nevada would like to see A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session pass in both houses, again, reaffirming Nevada's commitment to the abolition of slavery in all forms.

**Chair Gorelow:**

We will now go down to Las Vegas. Is there anyone in Las Vegas who would like to testify in support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session? Seeing no one coming up to the table, are there callers in support?

**Jim Hoffman, representing Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice:**

Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice opposes slavery; therefore, we support this resolution.

**Jodi Hocking, Founder/Executive Director, Return Strong!, Carson City, Nevada:**

Return Strong! is an organization that is composed of people who are currently and formerly incarcerated, and their families and loved ones. We communicate regularly with about 1,500 people who are incarcerated or being treated in a substandard manner. We hear stories from Black, Brown, and poor people who are being taken advantage of daily. If anyone thinks that this is not a problem in Nevada, we are aware that there are numerous examples of this from the Department of Corrections across Nevada. We are in full support of not only ending the practice of slavery and indentured servitude, but changing the language in the *Nevada Constitution*.

**Quentin Savvoir, President, Las Vegas Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:**

I am in full support of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Assemblyman Watts for bringing this measure forward. It is amazing to me the things that we still need to legislate in this state and in our country. Two summers ago, we passed a resolution to denote that racism is a public health crisis in this state. It is only fitting that we would pass A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session a second time and ensure that we remove such harmful language from our state *Constitution*. The vestiges of slavery still have some permanence in our day-to-day society. Author Heather McGhee, in her book, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, perfectly outlines how the history of slavery has had an economic impact on all of us, no matter our skin color. It has had an environmental impact on all of us, no matter our skin color. It is to the benefit of Nevada and for the benefit of future generations that we remove this deeply harmful language from our *Constitution* to create a more inclusive state, a state where people can live whole, full, thriving lives. Again, I really appreciate Assemblyman Watts and all the bill sponsors for bringing this forward to create a better Nevada for our future tomorrows.

**Alfred Gourrier, President, Samuel L. Smith Educational Foundation:**

Our organization testified last year in support of this amendment. I would like to begin by congratulating Assemblyman Watts on the excellent historical background he gave regarding Nevada and its *Constitution*. The verbiage included in the *Nevada Constitution* was a conglomeration of constitutional language of the time, including the Missouri Compromise

and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. We appreciate that this language will be removed from the *Nevada Constitution*. We conclude by saying thank you for your effort to remove this clause from our *Constitution* and we support it.

**Yesenia Moya, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I believe slavery and involuntary servitude have no place in the *Nevada Constitution*. A person convicted of a crime may be incarcerated, but no one should ever be enslaved or forced into involuntary servitude. Please support our communities across the state and remove slavery and involuntary servitude completely from the *Nevada Constitution* because words matter. It is inhumane, antiquated, outdated, and has no room in our state.

**Mercedes Maharis, Member, Nevada Silver Haired Legislative Forum:**

Both Assemblyman Howard Watts and Attorney General Ford told us, during the 2021 Session, how slavery had affected them and their ancestors. Slavery directly affected my life, too, through decisions that my ancestors made. I have worked with our Nevada prisoners since the end of the last century and have seen slavery in this state continue inside the Department of Corrections. It is alive and well to this day. Nevada prisons are the new modern plantations with free labor exploitation. Mass incarceration is a failed social experiment stemming from the slavery social structure throughout history. It also must be abolished to forward our Nevada communities and that involves voting yes for this bill. Our passage of A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session is critical to be able to bring us to a new plateau of vitality.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Thank you very much for sharing your story and for calling in support. If there are no more callers in support, we will hear testimony in opposition. [There was none.] We will now hear from callers in neutral testimony. [There was no one.] Assemblyman Watts, do you have additional comments?

**Assemblyman Watts:**

As you have heard, words matter. You have heard the history of hurt that has been caused by this language continuing to exist. I do want to note that Attorney General Aaron Ford could not be here today, but I want to include his written testimony [[Exhibit D](#)] in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session. I would be remiss if I did not mention that it is Black History Month. I humbly ask all the members of these Committees to join me. Let us make history together. I urge your support.

[[Exhibit E](#) was submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

**Chair Gorelow:**

Thank you very much, Assemblyman Watts. With that, I will close the hearing on A.J.R. 10 of the 81st Session. We will now hear presentations about county election administration in Nevada.



**Lorena Portillo, Assistant Registrar of Voters, Election Department, Clark County:**

Clark County is governed by seven County Commissioners and administered by our County Manager's office [page 3, [Exhibit F](#)]. We have over 2.3 million residents. We are currently twelfth-largest by population in the United States. Unincorporated Clark County alone has over 1 million residents. Currently, we have over 1.3 million registered voters. We span over 8,000 square miles in a territory about the size of New Jersey. Currently, we also have 900 precincts. The task of running our elections is fulfilled by 40 full-time staff members. We program and prepare 5,000 ImageCast X voting machines. We have 10,000 pieces of peripheral equipment that we use to support the elections along with 13 electronic poll books.

Our office maintains voter registration rolls; provides voter registration opportunities including working with the community; and processes voter registrations [page 4, [Exhibit F](#)]. Our field registrars go out and register voters, along with providing that training for advocacy groups that go out into the field. We conduct candidate filing as well as coordinate the municipal elections with Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Mesquite. We process initiative petitions, referendums, candidate petitions, and recall petitions. We coordinate the delivery of sample ballots for every single election. We process mail ballots for every election as well as tabulate the results. We recruit and supervise over 3,500 temporary workers who also support our in-house processes for Election Day and early voting. We prepare and maintain the electronic poll books and the voting machines for the election cycles as well. We coordinate early voting and Election Day sites. We have signature curing; we have a mail ballot registration process that expands during an election cycle; and we have hotlines that also help our teams out in the polls as well as the public.

Our voter outreach program works with organizations that request information about the election process, including what might be new on the horizon. We go in the field to demo our equipment by including poll pads from 2021 and 2022 so that people understand what they will see at the polling place. We also have a bimonthly newsletter which provides additional information about what is to come in each election cycle, and we encourage people to subscribe.

We administered to 1.3 million active registered voters and mailed out over 1 million sample ballots [page 5, [Exhibit F](#)]. In addition, we electronically delivered over 30,000 sample ballots, which saved us \$50,000 to \$60,000 in printing and postage costs per election. From the end of the 2020 election, up until the November 2022 close of registration, we processed about 224,000 new registrations and over 712,000 voter record updates. That includes party updates, especially the address updates that we get from the Department of Motor Vehicles as well as online and in a paper format. We processed over 346,000 mail ballots. A total of 683,867 people went out to vote during that election. Mail ballot voting has gone up significantly compared to the 2018 election, which is a comparable election. In 2018 we had over 4 percent of the voters voting by mail versus 25 percent in 2022. The surprising statistic is the comparison between early voting in 2018 versus 2022: 34 percent versus 14 percent. Election Day voter turnout was 20 percent in 2018 and 11 percent in 2022 [page 6].

The really significant comparison in our area is in the increase in registered voters over the last 22 years. In 2000 we had over half a million registered voters and a turnout of 384,772; but in 2020 we experienced a turnout of 974,185 voters. As of 2022 we now have over 1.3 million registered voters.

Our early voting program has been very successful [page 7, [Exhibit F](#)]. We had over 196,000 participate in the 2022 General Election. Every single early voting site is a mail ballot drop-off site, which is convenient for our voters. We had 88 sites countywide, which included 35 available daily in supermarkets, shopping centers, malls, community centers, libraries, and early voting tents. Over 96,000 voters went out to our early voting tents. Why use tents? We have tents basically because we needed to establish voting sites that could accommodate parking, ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] accessibility, and the volume of voters wanting to vote early that we have in Clark County.

Another successful strategy to accommodate voters is that a voter does not have to go to a designated polling place site, which voters love [page 8, [Exhibit F](#)]. If they work in one city and live in another, they can vote wherever they work or at the school of their choice during Election Day. Again, Election Day voting sites are also drop-off locations, which is another convenience for the voter. Over 146,000 voters went to vote during Election Day. We had 128 locations and 13 in the rural areas. We are very proud of our new electronic poll book, which has become a very efficient way of checking in voters. It takes two to five minutes to check voters in, versus looking at a lot of paper. Considering the volume that we handle, we are very happy about that.

Now that the Department of Homeland Security has designated election departments as critical infrastructure, we never stop thinking about the security of our voting processes [page 9, [Exhibit F](#)]. We work very closely with the Office of the Secretary of State, and every staff member is trained and is aware of the importance of cybersecurity. We have been funded to receive Albert sensors, which monitor incoming Internet traffic in our database. In addition to the Nevada Office of Cyber Defense Coordination, we also have an internal Clark County support team. They work very closely with us, including helping us with our penetration testing of our equipment before and during the election cycle, which is very important. We want to feel, just as the public wants to feel, very safe with the equipment that we use at the polls. Our internal Clark County support team also tracks phishing and cyber threats, and provides countywide training. This is very important because it is not just the leaders and managers receiving training, it is also the frontline staff. Since this is also where we could receive cyberattacks, this is extremely important as well.

Currently, we are conducting a special election for the city of Henderson Ward 1 while also working on implementing a new voter registration system, which is a tremendous feat [page 10, [Exhibit F](#)]. Our current voter registration system is over 20 years old, so our goal is to have higher efficiency through automation. Our voter volume makes this necessary. We hope to have the new system go live by July 3, 2023, to begin testing the actual dual entry piece.

We are very excited to be working with the Secretary of State's Office to successfully implement the top-down voting system. That will bring us much-needed standardization, efficiency, real-time data, and reporting, which we are really excited about. We are also working on improvement in our recruiting and training process, so our poll workers know exactly what they are doing. It is of the utmost importance that they know how to use the equipment, how to answer the questions, and, conversely, when not to answer the question and call in. With the major changes to our systems, our training manuals are also undergoing enhancements. We are also implementing a poll worker management tool to streamline the process of managing, training, and evaluating poll workers more successfully. Trained poll workers can be paid, and the evaluation tool will help us decide whether they have been someone we would like to work with again.

As we implement these new upgrades, we are also in preparation for the 2024 election which will consist of two primaries in addition to the general election. We are already designating our polling places and have a tentative schedule on our website. If you have future questions for the Clark County Election Department, please do not hesitate to ask. I am Lorena Portillo, Assistant Registrar of Voters, and our liaisons are Joanna Jacob and Ashley Kennedy.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Are there any questions from the Committees?

**Assemblyman DeLong:**

Could you provide the Committees a breakdown of how many of the 346,000 mail-in ballots came in by mail versus how many were dropped off during Election Day?

**Lorena Portillo:**

I would like to take that question back and I will be happy to personally get that information to you.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I also would like that same information Assemblyman DeLong requested. My question is, do you consider drop-offs to be mail-in ballots? Even though they were dropped off at the polling site. I am getting a nod in the affirmative. The drop boxes that you had on Election Day, are those only at actual polling sites or are there drop boxes in other locations that are not the polling sites?

**Lorena Portillo:**

We do have additional drop-off locations at the city clerk's office as well.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I have the same question for early voting. You have drop boxes during early voting as well. Is it the same setup? Do you have the same number of drop boxes at the same locations during early voting as you have on Election Day?

**Lorena Portillo:**

Yes, we do. The city clerks' offices also serve as drop-off locations. We do provide the complete listing in the sample ballot. If you would like, I can also send a sample ballot we previously used in the general election as an example.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Are there any other questions from Committee members? [There were none.] Next, we have a presentation by Executive Director Stacey Montooth and Commissioner Tammi Tiger of the Nevada Indian Commission. I want to thank you so much for being here and I appreciate your patience as we tried to accommodate travel arrangements. I was just informed that some of your members were also dealing with travel arrangements. I am so sorry and would have moved your presentation up if I had known earlier. Thank you to those who were able to stay.

**Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission:**

I am the Executive Director of the Nevada Indian Commission, and also a citizen of the Walker River Paiute Nation. I will be presenting alone. The other presenters, including Commissioner Tiger, live in Las Vegas, and everybody was on the same flight and had to leave. First, Happy Valentine's Day, and second, Happy Nevada Tribes Legislative Day. I had the pleasure of speaking with the Government Affairs Committee this morning. I am grateful for the opportunity to talk specifically about voting. It is such a critical issue to our tribal nations.

In our tribal meetings, whether it is a basketball tournament or an official government council meeting, we always start our meetings with land acknowledgements [page 2, [Exhibit G](#)]. I want to acknowledge the lands that we are gathering on. The Numa, the Newe, the Nuwuvi, Wa She Shu, and Pipa Aha Macav have lived in the Great Basin since time began. Please join me in expressing our deepest respect and gratitude to our five major Indigenous groups: the Northern Paiute, the Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, the Washoe, and the Mojave. This gratitude and respect is not just because they are the original caretakers of the land that we now call Nevada but also for their enduring stewardship and the protection of our shared lands and waterways. Today, the Nevada Indian Commission reaffirms its commitment to improve the quality of life for 28 tribal nations, bands, and colonies, and the 62,000-plus urban Indians who choose to make Nevada their current home.

Referring to our mission statement [page 3 [Exhibit G](#)], I want to make sure that you are all aware that my agency, the Nevada Indian Commission, was created in statute. We were originally launched in 1965 under *Nevada Revised Statutes* Chapter 233A. The day-to-day task of our five-person office is to improve the quality of life for those 28 tribal nations as well as the urban Indians. Basically, I serve as a conduit between the Office of the Governor and our 28 tribal chairs.

I wanted to talk today, not just about our priorities [page 4, [Exhibit G](#)], but to make sure you are aware of the breakdown of our population. You recently participated in the recent census from which the tribal communities received amazing data. In the past, Native Americans made up 1 percent of the population, with representation reflecting this number. Through the current census data, we learned that we are 105,000 people strong. I had the pleasure of addressing 167 tribal elders, Native learners, and elected officials who came today to visit the people's house to learn more about the process of our Legislature. We were thrilled to get to announce those numbers.

In 2020, according to a national report that was put out by All Voting Is Local, Native Americans in the state of Nevada had the highest voter turnout [page 5, [Exhibit G](#)], the highest jump of any other ethnicity or group. Walker River Paiute Nation, my tribe, is located over three counties, but our people vote in Mineral County. Mineral County did not have as high of a turnout in their overall voter participation as the Walker River Paiute Nation. I want to make sure that it is clear: not only are our people turning out to vote, but we are running for office as well. We are really looking forward to getting more data about the most recent election. We have not been able to secure that. My guess is that it was not a presidential election, so the specific numbers are a little bit slower to obtain. Absolutely a highlight, but also a motivating factor for all our tribal nations and our leaders, was that we had voting services on 13 of our tribal lands on our reservations this last year. Through legislation, through working with the Office of the Secretary of State, there is a process in place now where our tribal governments can request an Election Day polling site, can request early voting, and can request drop-off sites. We have same-day election services where, in some instances, we can use our tribal identification for same-day registration. We celebrate that this has been happening on our 13 tribal lands. As a reminder, however, we have 28 federally recognized tribes. Clark County is the fastest-growing county for Indigenous people in the entire country, so we absolutely want to accommodate all our urban Indians that live in Clark County.

Thanks to our voting efforts [page 6, [Exhibit G](#)], in conversations between our 28 tribal councils, our sovereign governments, the Secretary of State's Office, and our legislators, we were successful in extending the deadline that was mandated for application for those voting services has now been extended to August, which really is helpful. It helps accommodate the busy schedules of our elected officials. In addition, those forms that now do not have to be turned in until August also have an option for drop-off locations. That is really something that is so helpful to our tribal nations. I understand what I called "accommodations" were put in place during the pandemic, but please remember we have only three urban reservations situated in metropolitan areas. The balance are in very remote areas. It takes an hour and a half for some of my relatives to get to Walmart. To cast her vote, my beautiful 97-year-old grandmother had to arrange for transportation so she could drive all the way to Hawthorne. I know that we can use mail-in ballots, but some of our tribal members are not comfortable with the relationship between the federal government and the United States Postal Service. Having the drop-off is very helpful.

All this information is now posted on the Secretary of State's website. It was mentioned earlier in a roundtable discussion, that we have also been able to attract nonnatives out to our reservations and into our colonies specifically to vote. These enthusiastic, engaged, civil citizens know that now we have these polling places established. In some counties, it is closer for them to come to the reservation than it is to go to the county seat.

Again, the Secretary of State's Office has affirmed that we should be able to use our tribal identification [page 7, [Exhibit G](#)] for same-day registration. I had the pleasure of going to Clark County and meeting with registrars and county clerks after the most recent election to talk to them specifically about some of the hurdles that our native citizens must endure to cast their ballot. Just as nonnatives can use a military ID, a Nevada driver's license, or the Nevada ID, the Secretary of State agrees that natives should be able to use our tribal identification for online voter registration. We want to continue to work with the Secretary of State's Office, along with all the county clerks and registrars, so that when our tribal citizens request polling station locations, early voting information, drop-off locations, and on-site registration, election officials are familiar with the cultural intricacies of our communities. In Nevada, we have 20 different tribal identification cards. It is helpful to be reminded that these identification cards are literally and figuratively for a country within a country. We want to ensure that all election officials are familiar with this form of identification.

Finally, I would like to relate that we had an amazing situation which happened last year regarding our native language speakers. In Nye County, we have two federally recognized tribes who have enough fluent speakers that they met the threshold to have voting materials provided in their ancient Shoshone language, which has been used since time started. You can view the video from the Yomba Shoshone Tribe in Duckwater, Nevada, where these elders were helping other fluent native speakers get through all the amendments. It was just beautiful.

Again, I am Stacey Montooth. I work at the Stewart Indian School. I personally invite you all to come out and visit our cultural center there Monday through Friday. It is the only former federal boarding school in the state of Nevada. There is not a member of my people who does not have a direct connection to that boarding school, including myself. When I sit at my desk, I can look out the window and see the dormitories where my grandmother was raised. She was sent to Stewart when she was four years old. We just celebrated her ninety-seventh birthday last month. I stand for questions.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Thank you so very much, Executive Director Montooth. Again, I apologize for not getting you up here first. Committee members, are there any questions or comments?

**Assemblyman D'Silva:**

Thank you, Executive Director Montooth, for another excellent presentation. I think it is very important that every vote is counted, especially the votes of our rural native populations. I have a question. When it comes to the actual collecting of ballots and verifying that the material in the ballot boxes are votes, is that the responsibility of the county recorders or of the tribal governance? When it comes to delivering some of those ballots to a place where they can be counted, who is responsible for the actual deliverance of those ballots?

**Stacey Montooth:**

Our reservations and tribal governments work in tandem with the respective counties, but ultimately all vote counting is under the purview of the respective county clerks and registrars. When it comes to drop-off ballots, let me make sure that I understood your question. Like everything in Indian Country, voting becomes a community effort. We have elders who are checked on, on a regular basis by community health workers. These health workers check glucose levels, blood pressure, and make sure that our elders are taking their high blood pressure medicine. Often, during the 2020 election, our elders would have their ballot completed and sealed with their signature, then give it to the person who comes into their house every day. I know that in Owyhee, where the Duck Valley reservation spans the Nevada-Idaho border, we had educators and classroom teachers who took a day off so that they could collect everybody in Owyhee's completed, sealed ballots and drive the ballots all the way to Elko, to the county seat.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

How many people do you have on staff who do all the work the Commission is responsible for doing?

**Stacey Montooth:**

We have a staff of five. Just like almost every Nevada agency, we have an empty position, so we currently have four people on our staff, with two completely dedicated to the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum. We really have two people who are charged with the task of improving the quality of life for 105,000 Nevadans every day. It is a small but mighty staff. We focus on four main areas: education, economic development, the environment, and health and human services.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I commend you and your very limited staff for having 28 tribes here in the state of Nevada. You are doing the Lord's work, and perhaps during this legislative session we may be able to find it somewhere within our budget and policies to make sure you have the additional staff and resources you need to truly do the work for the community.

**Stacey Montooth:**

That would be so welcomed.



**Chair Gorelow:**

Are there any other questions from Committee members? [There were none.] Next we will have Mr. William "Scott" Hoen, the Carson City Clerk-Recorder.

**William "Scott" Hoen, Clerk-Recorder, Carson City:**

I am the recently elected Carson City Clerk-Recorder and Public Administrator. Note that I go by "Scott." Please do not hesitate to drop by, ask questions, email, text, or call. I have been on the job for 43 days and am learning something new every day. I manage a staff of 14 people and was fortunate to inherit a strong team. I was a Carson City election poll worker during the 2020 election, working with the Election Division in Carson City, which got me interested in running for the office. This is the first time in 28 years that someone has been elected to the Carson City Clerk-Recorder and Public Administrative role that has not had previous experience working in the office. In Secretary of State Aguilar's election overview to the Committees during the joint meeting last week, he pointed out that 10 of 17 county election officials either resigned or decided not to run for reelection.

The duties of my department will be picking up in September as we gear up in January for the 2024 presidential preference primary. Our department was originally staffed to serve a community of 15,000 people, but Carson City's population now stands at almost 60,000 people [page 4, [Exhibit H](#)]. In fact, we are about ready to add another district court because we are hitting 60,000 residents. We currently only print and distribute documentation in English, but we will soon hit the threshold needed to publish materials in Spanish as well.

I would like to point out the most recent Carson City voter registration breakout, as of January 2023 [page 6, [Exhibit H](#)]. Both the Republican and Democratic registrations have dipped, but our independent voter numbers are on the rise. After we had implemented Assembly Bill 321 of the 81st Session, we discovered 3,895 undeliverable mail-in ballots were returned [page 7, [Exhibit H](#)]. During the general election we had 1,687 mail ballots returned, so 5,582 ballots were returned undeliverable. These voters will then be moved to inactive status to prevent a future ballot from being mailed out. We are not deleting voters by moving them to inactive status. They can always contact our office or show up and still vote as a registered voter. We would just move them back to active status or create a new registration form if they choose. Identifying inactive voters is a big mailing expense that we can control. We must educate our voters to return those ballots that are not theirs so we can move that voter to inactive status and prevent those mail-in ballots from being mailed in the future to people who no longer live at that address.

Our same-day registration numbers show only 349 voters taking part [page 9, [Exhibit H](#)]. Same-day registration takes time, so we will need to be sure that our staffing requirements ensure that waits be kept to a minimum. It is more difficult to train workers for this position. They must have the technical skills to handle all the possibilities that same-day registration can entail. We only have four full-time election officials, including myself. We must focus our attention on this registration to minimize the wait time in line.



*Nevada Revised Statutes* Chapter 293 has a lot of requirements. I am going through it to be sure that I am abiding by the rules and regulations, but it is a challenge to get up to speed [page 11, [Exhibit H](#)]. I am using my staff to make that happen. Our Carson City poll workers will be challenged this January and February with the presidential preference primary election. We will go through the normal process, but this year we are going to have the detriment of training during the holiday season. The first two weeks in December is when we are going to have to have our poll workers come to be trained on the systems. We will see how the demands of these three elections in 2024 impact our election worker participation [page 12, [Exhibit H](#)]. There are multiple challenges when training election workers, especially with regards to updated technology. There are new cybersecurity rules and technical skills to become familiar with, regulations to be trained in, and new information on how to handle mail-in ballots. I feel these are just some of the reasons that older workers are less likely to want to help.

Carson City purchased equipment meant to handle the volume of absentee requests based on an estimate of 4,000 absentee requests prior to Assembly Bill 321 of the 81st Session, but my department is now handling about 20,000 requests [page 13, [Exhibit H](#)]. This means that we need to purchase a backup tabulator that can handle this higher volume. We are also required to store additional equipment and information for each election; this means that the three elections held in 2024 will require additional storage space.

We will have some overlapping of election functions [page 14, [Exhibit H](#)], including candidate filing, along with the strong possibility of converting our current system to a top-down system for the June primary. Candidacy filing, if moved up with Senate Bill 53, could present more problems for us with that February presidential preference primary. Poll observation will be an important part of our voting process. We have our polling locations and drop boxes set up for observers, and we are working on improving the process at our Carson City election headquarters. Currently we have observers in our office, but the space is limited so it is not the best situation for them to work and us to count. We are in the process of putting up some cameras, which will allow them better visibility with an optimal view while freeing up space for us.

Cleaning up the voter rolls is a big issue with Carson City voters [page 16, [Exhibit H](#)]. When I was going door-to-door I was asked many times what a clerk-recorder does. Most people were surprised to learn that the clerk runs the elections for the city. That was also when I learned about voters receiving ballots for former tenants who had passed away. Voters mentioned the expense of the unused, undeliverable ballots and that they were worried about the possibility of fraudulent activity. Our voters want us to focus on cleaning up the voter rolls. Doing so will restore voter confidence in our system. As we educate them, we will tell them why we are moving those voters that had undeliverable mail-in ballots to inactive status. In Carson City, we need to let the voters know what they can do to help if the ballots they are receiving are not theirs. I discovered that most of the time they shredded the ballot

or threw it away. Education is needed so anyone receiving a ballot in error marks it "return to sender," or returns it to our office so we can take the steps necessary to move these voters to inactive status and prevent future ballots being mailed out in error.

The importance of voter education [page 17, [Exhibit H](#)] cannot be stressed enough. We are making plans to regularly communicate with our voters about how we manage the voter rolls. We get information daily regarding voters who have moved away or passed away, and we are managing those. We need to tell the voters more about the process involved in moving an active voter to inactive. Carson City is already putting plans in place to reach out to the news media. We plan on utilizing social media platforms and our website to explain what we are doing to increase that level of transparency and voter confidence.

The State is in the process of implementing the top-down voter system, the Voter Registration and Election Management project, to manage voter rolls with the goal of implementing this for the June primary of 2024 [page 18, [Exhibit H](#)]. I have extensive experience with technology, as well as in dealing with assessor data and systems. I know the challenges of converting data for all 17 counties is going to be difficult. Carson City has over 600,000 voter record documents to convert and nearly 70,000 records including active, inactive, removed, or secured voters that must be accounted for in our new system. To do the conversion, we need to make sure that the compatibility of our current equipment and processes happens properly to minimize the disruption to the elections in 2024.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) registration is primarily the way voter registration occurs in Carson City [page 19, [Exhibit H](#)]. Changes to the voter work record within the DMV's system continue to generate voter questions such as how their party got changed. It does create more work for us because we must do more investigative work. The data that we get is often incomplete and many times we have found that the voter did not wish to register, and it ends there.

Carson City always runs an excellent election. The city really steps up and plans for the contingencies that always seem to occur. There was some frustration from the voters and candidates about the amount of time that elapsed between the election and counting the mail-in ballots, with the four days provisional ballots require, signature curing, and reporting results.

The procedures we follow require recruiting bipartisan poll workers who are comfortable with using the new technology and who are willing to make the commitment to the time needed for training. We must do a better job at communicating with the voters so they understand the process as it unfolds. Thank you for allowing me to present and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Committee members, are there any questions?

**Assemblyman D'Silva:**

You were bringing up voter education and educating voters on the actual processes of the elections and how we go about voting. Do you have any specific ways that you would implement voter education programs in Carson City?

**Scott Hoen:**

I have met with our Carson City staff who is responsible for community relations. I know how to use tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube websites as a means of communication with social media. I am fortunate to have some team members with the city who are willing to do the backend work if I provide them the content. We are planning to release content at least every two weeks to let people know what we are doing regarding upcoming elections. I have already gotten the media on my side by inviting them into the office so that they can better understand the process. They would not be able to be in the office while the voting is going on but will be educated on the front end, so they are knowledgeable about the processes involved. We have some good plans in place to consistently get the word out.

**Assemblyman DeLong:**

I appreciate the presentation. In the last election cycle, you received just under 14,000 mail-in ballots. Could you provide the Committees with a breakdown between how many were received by mail versus those dropped off during Election Day? I know you may have to pull that data together and deliver it later.

**Scott Hoen:**

We had the mail-in drop-off box at the Senior Center, at our polling location, and at the office, but had not kept track of those in the past. This information is important to me as well, so I will get back to you with it. In this next election in 2024, we are going to keep track of them separately. I have a feeling a lot of people who dropped off that mail-in ballot on Election Day during that snowstorm were people who normally would have gone in and voted in person. We will track that in the future.

**Assemblyman DeLong:**

I understand. Thank you. Just my anecdotal experience from watching polling in Washoe County, I observed something similar. Lots get dropped off.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Are there any other questions?

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

On page 8 of your presentation, when you look at the total number of voters that came out, out of 37,000-plus voters, the most votes you received were by mail-in ballot whether they were mailed in or dropped off, correct?

**Scott Hoen:**

That looks to be correct. If you add the early voting count of 6,200 and the Election Day count of 3,300, it looks like mail ballots exceeded in-person.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I think it would be safe to say that by having the option of having a mail-in ballot that you could either place in a mailbox, or due to a storm or whatever, it was more convenient for your constituents to have that mail-in ballot option. Would that be a safe assumption?

**Scott Hoen:**

The rules all changed. I know there were a lot of people collecting ballots, going to communities as well. Those are all considered as mail-in ballots. It is a convenience factor, for sure.

**Assemblyman Monroe-Moreno:**

When you say that there were a lot of people collecting ballots, could you expand upon that? I do not know about collecting ballots.

**Scott Hoen:**

When I was campaigning, I heard from the residents that other people had knocked on their door wanting to collect their ballots so they could turn them in. Mine is a nonpartisan race, so I called on or I knocked on every door. I did not care what party they were with. I am here to serve all Carson City residents. I did hear stories. I had one person say 23 people from California—and they used these statistics—had collected 861 ballots to turn them in. This may be a rumor. I am not sure, but that is what was told to me.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

That is interesting but it is word of mouth. We have no actual proof that that happened, so let us just get that on the record that we have no proof that that happened. You said that you went door-to-door to find out about voters, not just for your election, but what was your message going door-to-door in your position that you have now? What was the message that you were carrying?

**Scott Hoen:**

My primary message was I am there to try to restore voter confidence and build voter integrity. I want to make sure that we are transparent and letting them know what we are doing, what I am doing to help clean up the voter rolls, because that is the perception that they have. The voters will know that someone is managing voter rolls and removing those who have passed away or moved away. I think that will build voter confidence.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

The confidence in the voter rolls, was that the lack of confidence by the constituents that you represent because of how the job was being handled by your predecessor? Or do you feel that that was because of the laws that were passed? Because the laws did not do anything to voter confidence, in my opinion.

**Scott Hoen:**

What I have observed is all the systems in place going forward are working wonderfully. I see the records coming in from vital statistics on people who passed away or moved away and we are managing them every day. The problem is with all the old records that we never cleaned up. This is indicative when you look at page 7, when we had 5,582 ballots undeliverable in two back-to-back cycles. This was inaccurate data that accounted for 15 percent of our voter rolls. That will not happen again, with that number going down in the future.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

It is encouraging to hear that you are going to do a better job than whoever held the seat before you to make sure that the voter rolls are more accurate. I also feel that it is incumbent on me, since you let so many of your personal feelings into your testimony here today, to point out that you have a responsibility in this position to make sure that the proper, correct, nonbiased, nonleaning information is given to your constituents so that they feel that the election is fair. Again, I will go back to that mail-in ballot. For my family it is much easier to mail it in, or drop it off, and some of us still vote in person, but it is evident by your numbers that that system did work.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Seeing no further questions for Mr. Hoen, next on my list I have Ms. Amy Burgans from Douglas County.

**Amy Burgans, Clerk-Treasurer, Douglas County:**

I would like to start with a quick introduction [page 2, [Exhibit I](#)]. I started my career in the United States Army, where I served as a military police officer on active duty. I went back into the Reserves post-9/11 after having my first three children. I currently hold a degree in business management. I am the proud mother of five children. In December 2020 I was appointed as the Douglas County Clerk-Treasurer when the previous clerk-treasurer resigned. I ran for reelection in 2022.

I currently have four full-time election staff members [page 3, [Exhibit I](#)]. This has increased from two full-time staff members when I took office in 2020. After the 2021 Legislative Session, it became clear that there was a need for four year-round, full-time staff members to achieve the standards that the Legislature was setting. One of our full-time staff is an information technology coordinator who assists in all the technology needs of the department and in the security of our election systems. I also hire four temporary full-time election staff during the election cycle to assist with the demands created by universal mail-in ballots, the

increase of phone calls, and assisting with office workload. I currently hire approximately 100 election workers to assist with vote centers, mail, ballot deconstruction, the duplication process, answering phones, and assisting voters in my office.

Due to the nature of same-day registration, I also pull six of my staff members from the clerk's office and two from our treasurer's office to assist during early voting and Election Day on site at the vote centers. These staff members are trained in the county's voter registration system and can process the same-day registrations and assist inactive voters to update their registration to be able to vote. They can also answer high-level questions that the public may have and oversee the election observers to ensure state law is being followed. This is a group effort by many people to ensure that the election process is being done correctly and that eligible voters are given every opportunity to vote. I also want to mention that two of our temporary full-time staff members work here for the Legislature during the session and then come back to work for me during the election cycle.

During the 2022 Primary Election, Douglas County had 41,582 active registered voters [page 4, [Exhibit I](#)]. During the 2022 General Election, we had 40,737 active registered voters. The reason that number decreased between the primary election in June and the general election in November was that our office used the undeliverable ballots to start the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) process. The NVRA is a process which is overseen by federal and state law and allows us to send affordable mail to voters to ensure they are still residing in Douglas County. The voter has a set amount of time to respond and if they do not respond, we place them as inactive in our voter management system. The voter stays inactive until they respond, whether by coming in to update their information, going online through the Secretary of State's registration website, or going to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), where the information is sent to us to update their voter information. If, after two federal general elections, they have not updated their information or voted, we are able to cancel them from our voter management system.

In Douglas County there are two early voting centers: the Douglas County Community Center in Gardnerville, and the historic Douglas County Courthouse in Minden, where our election office is also located [page 5, [Exhibit I](#)]. We offer roaming drop box locations, where a bipartisan team goes to several locations throughout the county to set up a secure drop box for three-hour blocks of time, staying with those drop boxes. These locations are prescheduled and listed on the sample ballot. We offer locations within neighborhoods at fire stations or town offices for the convenience of the voters. We also receive mail ballots via the post office except for weekends. On Election Day, we have five voting centers where any registered voter can show up to vote in person. Each location also has drop boxes for mail ballot drop off.

One of the questions that was previously asked by the Committees was how many mail-in ballots were received by our office versus how many mail-in ballots were received by the post office [page 6, [Exhibit I](#)]. The mail ballots delivered to us by the post office versus those that we received in drop boxes was close to a 50-50 split. On Election Day, we

received approximately 5,000 mail ballots in the drop boxes located at the voting centers. After Election Day, but prior to the last day per state law to receive mail ballots that are postmarked by Election Day, we received 555 mail ballots that were accepted and processed. After the last day to receive ballots to be accepted, we also received an additional 161 ballots that were rejected in our system. We are still receiving undeliverable ballots from the primary and the general through the post office.

The slide titled "2022 Votes Cast" [page 6, [Exhibit I](#)] shows the total amount of votes cast and the way that voters chose to do so. In the primary election 2,417 voters chose to vote in person on Election Day; 2,148 voted in person during early voting; and 13,598 voted by mail-in ballot. That was a total of 18,163 voters or 44 percent of the total active registered voters in Douglas County. For the general election, there were 4,707 voters who voted on Election Day; 5,564 that voted during early voting; and 18,985 who voted using mail-in ballots. That was a total of 29,256 votes or 72 percent. I will note that with the implementation of universal mail-in ballots, the number of people who show up to vote in person has decreased significantly.

This next slide [page 8, [Exhibit I](#)] gives an overview of the amount of mail received during the primary with signature discrepancies. We verify every signature on every mail ballot manually. My full-time staff verifies each signature on each ballot with the signatures that we have in our voter management system. Of the over 13,000 mail ballots that we received during the primary election, 130 had signature discrepancies; 70 of those ballots had signatures that did not match the signature in our voter management system; and the other 60 ballots arrived without signatures. When we received the ballots with discrepancies, we used every means available to reach out to our voters and cure the ballot. Most of our voters only have their address on file with us, but if we have an email address or a phone number, we contact them by all three means. Of the 130 ballots we received with discrepancies, we were only able to cure 41 of those ballots, or 32 percent.

One of the challenges we have in Douglas County is that we receive a large number of mail-in ballots in our drop boxes. On Election Day, we start processing them the day after the election. If their ballot needs to be cured, six days does not allow enough time for the letter we are required to send to the voter to get to them and for them to contact us.

The success of our same-day registration [page 10, [Exhibit I](#)] program depends heavily on our full-time staff. They are trained to process the same-day registrants and do updates during early voting and on Election Day. During the general election, Douglas County had 150 same-day registrants and 17 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) registrants who voted provisionally. The HAVA registrants vote provisionally because I must verify their eligibility to vote in Douglas County before I can accept their ballot. Of those voters who voted provisionally, we accepted 154 of their ballots. Those that were not accepted were all HAVA voters who did not provide the necessary documents to my office in time to verify their eligibility to vote in Douglas County. One of the reasons this happened was that some of the HAVA registrants had not yet obtained their Nevada driver's license, so had no valid



voting identification. When dealing with the DMV, it is normally necessary to make an appointment. However, during the election cycle, voters needing assistance were able to walk into the DMV for the purpose of getting a driver's license to vote. Unfortunately, that ended on Election Day and some of the people who voted provisionally needed to get to the DMV but were unable to. It would be nice if the DMV could be encouraged to continue to offer this service for the six days after the election in order that we could cure provisional ballots with the proper identification.

A voting program that is close to my heart is the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), which allows our military personnel who are stationed outside of our county and civilians who live overseas to vote [page 11, [Exhibit I](#)]. They are still registered voters of our county, just living elsewhere during the election. These men and women are fighting for our freedoms and need to be afforded every opportunity to exercise their right to vote. As you heard last Thursday from the Office of the Secretary of State during their presentation, this program is gaining in popularity for these voters. Douglas County has 354 active registered UOCAVA voters. Of these registered voters, only 161 of them voted in the 2022 General Election. In conversations with the Secretary of State's Office, we agree that we need additional educational materials to provide to the registered UOCAVA voters on their ability to use the program. If you are a member of the military, you can register in the county of your last residence in the United States, even if that home is owned by a new party.

To counter misinformation and public misperceptions about the way that mail ballots were processed, along with concerns regarding voter fraud, I decided to livestream the entire mail ballot process on YouTube [page 12, [Exhibit I](#)]. Douglas County then offered 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week coverage of all the ballot deconstruction, signature verification, and tally rooms where mail-in ballots were being processed. This live feed was available for the month that mail ballots were being processed and did not end until all our ballots were tallied. I have received positive feedback from the community on the transparency of our processes. Due to the limited space available in our election office in Douglas County, this allowed for an unlimited number of election observers to view the process from the comfort of their home. I would occasionally receive a phone call or an email on something that was happening in one of the rooms and was able to go back and review the footage and answer any of the questions that I received on the processing of our mail ballots.

This next slide [page 13, [Exhibit I](#)] explains some of the challenges Douglas County faces during an election cycle. Mail ballots are a very popular way of voting in Douglas County. The challenge we face is that we are simultaneously running three separate elections: early voting, Election Day voting, and processing mail ballots. With limited staff, this creates challenges when it comes to planning, processing, and ensuring that I am overseeing each facet of the election. Due to limited space for our election department, we take over the County Board of Supervisors' chambers for deconstruction of the mail ballots for approximately one month, leaving the county to find alternate locations for all their board meetings.



Another concern for Douglas County is the amount of time that it takes for us to get final results from our elections. In Douglas County we received almost 19,000 mail-in ballots for the general election. Over 5,000 of those were dropped off at drop box locations on Election Day. When these ballots are brought back, we start processing them the next day. With the many steps involved in processing each mail ballot, those 5,000 ballots take from three to four days. In a smaller county like Douglas, 5,000 votes can change any local race, so it is time-consuming but necessary to be thorough.

Starting in January of 2024, Assembly Bill 432 of the 81st Session takes effect, giving the Governor the ability to afford automatic voter registration to state agencies other than the DMV. Currently, Douglas County receives an average of 10,000 automatic voter registrations (AVRs) from the DMV per year. The expansion of this program could double or even triple that number. Our staff currently manually processes about 800 to 900 AVRs per month. Not all these registrations are new. Some are updates or duplicates of existing registrants, because if any piece of information is not the same on the AVR, it creates a duplicate voter file.

Another challenge with A.B. 432 of the 81st Session is that it takes a process that is currently being done by the DMV and puts the responsibility on the clerk's office. Currently, when you go to the DMV and they place you in the voter registration process, they provide you an informational sheet letting you know the process and allowing you to reach out to your clerk to change your party if so desired. This bill changed that process. The clerk must now send an informational packet to each registrant, whether they are a new registrant or just updating their information. Instead of providing a single sheet of paper, each clerk's office will now need to send a full packet of information, along with a postage-paid return envelope. The cost associated with this informational packet was not funded in the bill and will fall entirely upon each county, causing concern to many of the clerks and registrars across the state.

The result of the Secretary of State's top-down voter registration system will streamline the multiple voting systems used throughout our state. While the result will provide much-needed improvements, the implementation process will be difficult. What would be helpful is if the counties could hold off on the implementation of A.B. 432 of the 81st Session until the new voter management system is in place. Then perhaps the state would see fit to assist the counties in the implementation of A.B. 432 of the 81st Session as the counties use the new streamlined system. This would lessen the fiscal impact on the counties caused by A.B. 432 of the 81st Session. In Douglas County, for example, the budgetary impact that the presidential preference primary and the expansion of AVR will have on our county will be approximately \$150,000 [page 14, [Exhibit I](#)]. Douglas County is very appreciative to the Legislature for adding funding to the state budget for reimbursement to the counties to include our ballot stock and postage for the mail ballot program. Douglas County also received reimbursement for the primary in the amount of \$70,000 and has requested an additional \$70,000 for the general election. We also understand that this

funding is going to be available for ballot stock and postage for the presidential preference primary, for which we thank you. As a reminder, however, no additional funding has been approved for the AVR program that is scheduled to take effect in January.

I would like to close by saying thank you to each member of the Committees for your dedication and determination to ensure that we have fair, transparent, and accessible elections. I am here for any questions.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Committee members, are there any questions?

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I just wanted to follow up on something Ms. Burgans said at the end of her presentation to make sure I have it right. I think you said that A.B. 432 of the 81st Session, which potentially expands automatic voter registration to additional agencies, is at the Governor's discretion. My question is that Ms. Burgans spoke of a lack of funding, but do we have any indication yet from the Officer of the Governor if automatic voter registration is going to be expanded to other agencies?

**Amy Burgans:**

Yes, A.B. 432 of the 81st Session states that it is at the will of the Governor to be able to expand automatic voter registrations to any state agency that he or she deems fit. However, we already have the DMV AVR in place and our concern is twofold: one concern is the expansion of voter registration numbers needing verification. Douglas County already receives approximately 10,000 AVRs annually from the DMV. I estimated that this bill could potentially add an additional 5,000 AVRs from other agencies, which will require that my department provide informational packets for these additional AVRs. I budgeted for January to June of 2024 in anticipation of the additional funding needed. The second concern is that we have no idea what the true financial impact is going to be, but we must estimate that it will be significant, both financially and in staffing requirements.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Committees, are there any other questions or comments? [There were none.] Next, on Zoom, is Ms. Tami Rae Spero, Humboldt County Clerk.

**Tami Rae Spero, County Clerk, Humboldt County:**

Thank you very much for allowing me to appear virtually. I have been the Humboldt County Clerk since 2003. My presentation is similar to what you have seen from my colleagues who have spoken earlier. I have dedicated some of my presentation to the specific election challenges we are facing here in Humboldt County.

Humboldt County [page 3, [Exhibit J](#)] encompasses 9,658 square miles with a population, as of the recent census, of 17,285; 8,431 live within the city of Winnemucca. Humboldt County includes several smaller communities, including Paradise Valley, Orovada, Denio,

McDermitt, Golconda, and Valmy. Our economy is based primarily on agricultural activities and mining, which makes for a somewhat transient population. As you have heard from other presenters, this can create an issue maintaining voter rolls. Our most recent voter registration stood at 9,843 active voters with 871 inactive voters. We have 15 voting precincts within our county with five polling sites. We maintain our early voting center at our historic Humboldt County Courthouse and the West Hall of the Convention Center for our Election Day voting center, with additional polling centers in the Paradise Valley Community Hall, Orovada Community Hall, and the Fort McDermitt Tribal Office.

In my office we currently have six employees [page 4, [Exhibit J](#)]. I serve as the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, ex officio Sixth Judicial District Court Clerk, Jury Commissioner, Chief Election Officer, Voter Registrar, Head of the Business License Department for Humboldt County, and all other duties as set forth by *Nevada Revised Statutes*. The Humboldt County Clerk also manages federal, state, and local elections including city elections, special elections, and recall elections.

The Humboldt County Clerk's Office handles all duties related to elections, including:

- Voter registration and maintenance.
- Election preparation including machine programming, ballot design and proofing, pre and postelection testing, and deployment.
- Mail ballot and envelope design, proofing, receipt, review, signature verification, sorting, and secure storage; early voting management—multiple staff are on-site for all early voting hours, 96 hours in total.
- Election Day management—staff on-site at the main vote center and available for deployment to rural polling sites.
- Poll worker management, including contacting, staffing, training, and election cycle management.
- Assisting mail ballot board for workers.
- Electronic Absentee System for Elections (EASE) ballot processing including contacting UOCAVA voters, managing the requests, testing the EASE system, printing, and maintaining in a secure manner the EASE ballots, risk limit audit management.
- Postelections storage.
- Petition acceptance, processing, and signature verification.
- Candidate filing and record management.
- Transport and setup of the vote center polling site and preparation and transfer of rural polling sites equipment.
- Postelection duties including surveys and training.

Election planning never stops. It is truly a continuous process. This work is accomplished by my staff, and with the help of 36 to 45 volunteers. We have approximately 53 volunteers available to us currently.

Voting machines are available in Humboldt County [page 4, [Exhibit J](#)]. Humboldt County has thirty Dominion ImageCast X machines with voter verifiable printers: 2 machines are assigned to each of the three rural polling sites; 9 are assigned to early voting; 14 are assigned to the Election Day vote center, and 1 is assigned to the clerk's office for presidential elections or is used as a backup in non-presidential election years. We also have seven VOTEC VoteSafe electronic pollbooks, one ballot-on-demand system, associated tabulation equipment, and associated elections supplies including signage, voting booths, transport bags, and boxes with associated supplies.

Here are our election voter registration statistics [page 5, [Exhibit J](#)]. I have compared the 2020 General Election and the 2022 General Election. Our registration did increase between 2020 and 2022. As noted during the other presentations tonight, the mail-in voter number increased significantly. I would say that the mail ballot option has impacted the way people choose to vote in our community.

We have some challenges moving forward [pages 6 and 7, [Exhibit J](#)]. The first is recruiting and staffing. Recruiting bipartisan poll workers who are comfortable with using the new technology and are willing to make the commitment to the time needed for training is a problem across the state. Poll workers, especially in rural areas, tend to be retirees who used to volunteer to socialize and see their friends. As we have seen in the last two election cycles, poll workers are often subject to a high level of stress due to issues that have occurred. We have also had issues with maintaining sufficient staffing in my office due to the stress associated with elections, the limited budgets, and limited office space. I lost a new hire after the 2022 election due to these issues.

Costs continue to increase going forward. We do hope to see ongoing funding assistance for the costs associated with mail ballot production and mailing and funding for the new voting equipment due to the aging system we have. We are now experiencing funding increases for ongoing maintenance and warranty costs for the current system and sufficient funding for implementing the new top-down system.

There are multiple elections in 2024. We have concerns about the ability to implement a new system in a year with multiple elections, due to staff size and multiple required duties within the office. We also recognize the need to be able to understand and respond to the voters' concerns and make them feel confident and comfortable with the election process again. We want to promote participation of our population in the election process.

Voter confidence is an issue. We want to see confidence in our automatic voter registration (AVR) expansion, given the challenges that occur with the current automatic voter registration agency. That the planned AVR expansion is proposed to occur in an election year, possibly without the proper infrastructure and training for these agencies, is also a concern for us.

Humboldt County Courthouse has a lack of storage space. We also have issues with both space and technology availability for our election offices as well as our polling sites, as well as storage sites for that election equipment. We would like to see funding for security needs, including cameras, at storage sites and at polling locations, which is not currently available. We are working with local government to seek that funding at our upcoming budget hearings.

Training for volunteers and staff is an issue. We need ongoing training of clerk staff within the office due to the number of new individuals who will be responsible for multiple statutory duties throughout that whole process. We would like to see continued support for efforts to engage local tribes in the election process. While Humboldt County successfully deployed a polling site at the Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation for Election Day, it did not occur without significant efforts with tribal leadership for the site planning and the identification of poll workers for a site that is over 70 miles from our office. There were some struggles with finding people who were willing to commit to that location.

Additionally, we would identify lack of a single source for election-related processes and requirements. Therefore, I state my support for Bill Draft Request (BDR) 24-409 which directs the Office of the Secretary of State to create an election manual. The importance of this cannot be understated. As changes occur constantly to our election processes, there is a lot in statute to keep track of. As we restaff, it would be nice to have all the information we need to keep track of in an online source, including pertinent BDRs. We have a concern about certain bill draft requests listed here and the potential for unfunded mandates with these BDRs: BDR 24-33, BDR 24-445, BDR 24-836, BDR 24-412, and BDR 24-364. The potential for unfunded mandates will always be a concern for those of us associated with the election process.

Our thoughts for support [page 8, [Exhibit J](#)] would be legislative consideration for a long-term funding source for election-related activities to include technology improvement, equipment upgrades, staffing needs, training resources, security improvement, infrastructure needs, poll worker pay, and voter outreach. We would like to see efforts by the state and local governments to find ways to encourage participation by citizens of the various communities, including the tribal nations, as election workers.

We would like to see continued communication by our legislators and legislative staff with local officials, including in the rural communities, about proposed legislation and the potential impact of said legislation on limited resources. We also seek assistance from both the Legislature and the Secretary of State's Office to assist local election officials with engaging with the county commissions to help them to understand and support the processes and efforts related to voting.

I hate to always end with challenges, so I would like to make some positive comments to this Committee [page 9, [Exhibit J](#)]. The continued support of the Secretary of State and the efforts of our elections division over the last few years have been absolutely wonderful. We

thank them for this. I also want to comment on the solidarity of the county clerks and registrars in the state of Nevada for their efforts to work together and support each other. We are a small state. It is nice to know that there are people we can lean on. I also want to compliment the efforts of our legislators who are seeking to obtain the input of election officials across the state, to craft the laws necessary to protect, improve, and promote elections in the state of Nevada. Finally, I would like to thank the voters of the state of Nevada because that is who we do all of this for.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Committee members, do we have any questions?

**Chair Ohrenschall:**

My question relates to page 7 [[Exhibit J](#)]. I appreciate the effort that Humboldt County did to provide that polling place on Election Day at the Fort McDermitt Reservation. Was there any thought of trying to provide a polling place during early voting on the Fort McDermitt Reservation? If not, I wondered why that did not happen or why you were not able to make that happen. Were there any other tribal lands in Humboldt County where you considered placing a polling place, either for Election Day voting or for any portion of the early voting period? What type of outreach do you have to tribes in Humboldt County? What other tribes perhaps might need a polling place? Finally, was there any effort to try to get anything for early voting on the reservation there?

**Tami Spero:**

As part of a request from that tribal office, we did attempt to organize early voting. Maxine Red Star, who contacted my office, had some travel plans. With the very small staff they have, it was difficult to find another contact because Ms. Red Star is the chairperson. There was a considerable amount of time between Ms. Red Star's request and finding someone to communicate with while she was traveling, which made the request more difficult. Another issue was finding poll workers for the site. Early voting requires volunteers commit to multiple days of multiple hours each day. The tribal area and the McDermitt location are not huge communities. Last time, to solve the staffing problem, we had two volunteers from the community step up on Election Day. The McDermitt librarian, along with a local businesswoman, arrived early and drove through quite a serious snowstorm to bring those ballots in, and they may be willing to again assist with future elections. We do have two tribal reservations, the other one being the Winnemucca Indian Colony. The building where the Winnemucca Colony may have planned to place a polling site was a victim of arson, so they are in the process of improving their infrastructure. When it has been completed, they may reach out to us. That polling site would be within two miles of an existing polling site, but we would work with them if they requested us to.



**Chair Ohrenschall:**

I have a follow-up request. Do you know if participation there on the Fort McDermitt Reservation was greater than on the Winnemucca Indian Colony or on the other tribal lands in Humboldt County? Do you think it had anything to do with the Election Day site? If you do not currently have this data, could you provide it later?

**Tami Spero:**

I do not have that data. The town of McDermitt and the Fort McDermitt Reservation are both in precinct 10, while the Winnemucca Indian Colony is in the center of one of Winnemucca's largest precincts. I do not know how easily we could determine who voted from those specific addresses. We did not have a huge physical turnout at Fort McDermitt. We had more mail-in ballots from the reservation. Going forward, however, we are going to promote it more. As people get used to voting at that site, voting numbers will increase. If all works well, we plan to turn the polling site into a voting center, where anybody from those areas can vote. In addition, if someone from Winnemucca who is a member of the Fort McDermitt tribe wants to travel out there and vote on the reservation lands, they would be able to do that. We also want to look at working toward same-day registration. We have now confirmed that the technology at the tribal offices there is secure and can be made available for voting purposes. We hope to be able to move forward and expand that entire process going into 2024.

**Chair Ohrenschall:**

It clarified some of what I was asking about. If there is a way in the future to isolate the data from the Winnemucca Indian Colony versus the Fort McDermitt Reservation, I would appreciate that.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Next, we have Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

On page 7 [\[Exhibit J\]](#), the challenges you have listed include lack of storage space, updating technology, and upgrading or acquiring security. Have you done any research regarding what those costs would be to get to the security level that you need to ensure that everyone is safe, upgrade your technology, and increase available storage? Do you have a budget in mind for these improvements?

**Tami Spero:**

We have done some research, but I do not have those numbers in front of me. There was a potential grant we had hoped to use to acquire security cameras, but we ran into some difficulties. The Humboldt County Courthouse is also a historical building designed by Frederic J. DeLongchamps in 1921 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, as well as our primary office and storage site. There is a lengthy process involved in doing work of any type on historical buildings, so we are looking at alternative areas where the installation processes for security cameras might not be so restrictive. The

Winnemucca Convention and Visitors Authority (WCVA), who handles our main vote center, is also looking at funding security cameras. I believe the camera system that was originally proposed for the courthouse for the areas where we needed security coverage was estimated to be somewhere in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range, with cloud storage included in that estimate. The estimate would be approximately the same for WCVA. Cloud storage would give the Secretary of State's Office access to the data through a specific portal, ensuring that if we had an issue with our voting system, it could be viewed and assessed remotely.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I will take you up on the invitation to come out to Humboldt County and check out the courthouse.

**Tami Spero:**

We would welcome you. It is always wonderful to have our legislators come and see our beautiful courthouse and meet our hard-working staff.

**Chair Gorelow:**

We will take you up on that offer, Ms. Spero. Committee, are there further questions? [There were none.] Next, we will hear from Ms. Jamie Rodriguez, the Washoe County Registrar of Voters.

**Jamie Rodriguez, Registrar of Voters, Washoe County:**

First, I would like to address a couple of challenges Washoe County faces with our voting volunteer process. We must recruit and train over 500 election workers to support our election sites and maintain our voting equipment [page 3, [Exhibit K](#)]. In addition, we hire between 10 and 25 full-time temporary employees to get through the election. This number varies based on the number of temporary employees who are willing to stay through the election and how many temporary employees will become available through the agency we use to obtain additional temporary personnel. We also have about 75 county staff who come down and help us process the actual mail ballots for the election. County staff have all been background-checked so that we can ensure that those are individuals who should be in our secure processing rooms and are qualified to do so. Through interlocal agreements, we conduct elections on behalf of both Reno and Sparks, both cities within Washoe County.

I know that there are mixed emotions about universal mail-in ballots, but one of the true benefits is that this is a very positive way of helping maintain voter rolls. Prior to this, we only sent out election mail with redistricting or with newly registered voters. Sending out election mail more frequently as we do now helps us maintain the voter rolls more accurately. Voters are far more apt now to send back "return to sender" if they receive election mail for someone who no longer resides at their address. Thankfully, we do get a lot of that from our residents. With the help of the local media, we pushed very heavily the



importance that if you do get a ballot at your address for somebody who does not live there, please do not rip it up. Please put "return to sender," on it and send it back to us so we can continue to clean up our voter rolls.

Information on our total turnout does include mail-in versus early voting on Election Day 2022 [page 5, [Exhibit K](#)]. For the primary, we had a 30 percent turnout, which was higher than the 2018 primary, which was just shy of 27 percent. For the general, we were at 64 percent. In 2018 it was almost 70 percent. Note, however, that we did process more actual voters for a lower percentage of turnout in this election than we did have in 2018, which is because our voting population has grown significantly since 2018. I show ballot information broken down by category on page 6 [[Exhibit K](#)], and I have included the reasons for being unable to process all we received. For instance, there is a discrepancy between that number and the total number of mail ballots received. If there is damage done to the envelope, then our sorting machine is not able to read that information. Those ballots must be manually checked in by our staff.

Previous presenters this evening also noted that callers will call saying they did not receive a ballot and either request to have one mailed out to them or to come and pick one up. We issue that second ballot. With mail-in, they may finally get the first ballot thinking it is the second ballot. They vote that ballot and send it in, but it comes back to us as a suspended ballot. We must wait until after Election Day to unsuspend that ballot, verify that they have not voted by other means, and count that vote. We also received one ballot from a deceased voter. We did cure 1,600 ballots this election, which is high.

We are proud of the support that we get from Washoe County [page 7, [Exhibit K](#)]. We have staff who walk away from their normal responsibilities with the county to help support our elections. The programming of the in-person voting machines is primarily done by county staff. We also have a technology services staff who is there to help with quality assurance to ensure that it is done properly, to help with any of the questions that may come up, and to create a manual to help with questions.

If we have issues with any of the equipment, members of technology services are dispatched to our vote centers to help address those issues. We occasionally get people who only come down once or twice, and we have people who come down regularly every week, multiple days a week, especially if we run short of volunteers. Our voting centers include mail ballot drop boxes. All mail ballot drop boxes are manned. We have a ballot clerk that date-stamps every ballot before it is put in the drop box to ensure that they are all date-stamped before they are ever received by our office.

We have three tribal voting centers: Pyramid Lake Tribe, the Summit Lake Tribe, and the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony had a separate "drop box only" at one of their smoke shop locations. Again, that is still a manned location, so we provided

ballot clerks to accept all those mail ballots at a voting center. This ensured that we met the bipartisan requirement as there were always at least two staff members at each of our "drop box only" locations.

We processed almost 159,000 mail ballots for this election cycle. It is a steep increase from the number of mail ballots that we would have processed prior to 2018. There has been a lot of work done to our office to really be able to accommodate that steep increase in mail ballots. This number shows strong support from our voters who choose to vote through mail ballots. The percentage for mail in for both our 2022 Primary and General Elections was over 50 percent.

A significant update was done to our website to make voter information more easily accessible. There was a lot of information on our website that was not readily available or easy to find, so we did a substantial website update between the primary and the general election to make that information easier to find. There are a lot of codes that are difficult for people to understand and read. We know that we have ensured that information is far more readily available than it has been in the past, but we know we need to do more. We are going to continue to make those reports easier to read and understand for the public.

As we expand our voter education program, we are really hoping to help explain voter roll maintenance, explaining what triggers what, and what some of those federal and state laws are regarding undeliverable ballots. For instance, if a voter goes on vacation and uses a forwarding address, ballots cannot be forwarded and come back to our office. We then must track down contact information for each of these. I must send each voter a letter, which many of these particular voters did not realize.

A document that our office is extremely proud of is our "Life of a Ballot" flier [\[Exhibit L\]](#). Prior to the creation of this document, my staff spent at least 20 to 30 hours a week on the phone with residents trying to explain the process of how mail ballots are processed. We knew people wanted to understand each step, but to really walk somebody through each step was at least 30 minutes on the phone. "Life of a Ballot" is a resource now posted on our website, posted all over our office, in our observation area for people watching the processing of mail ballots, and in our main lobby. "Life of a Ballot" has been extremely successful, and we will now be providing it as a physical handout so voters have something that they can hold and refer to.

We were able to do a large expansion of our office [page 8, [Exhibit K](#)]. Our ballot-processing room is now a secure cage for holding ballots. We also did some upgrades and expansions of our equipment to be able to manage the volume and created a glass-encased, eight-person observation room for our mail ballot processing. We want to make sure that there is as much opportunity for everybody who wants to come and observe in person to be able to do so. In 2018 we started livestreaming the intake from voting centers on election night. In 2020 it was even more successful, due to COVID-19. We are online 24/7, so coverage starts the first day of early voting and goes through the day after ballots to

be cured so that it is covering the entirety of the time that ballots are being processed. For the primary, we had two cameras that cover our room, and two additional cameras to cover the expansion of the room. We have a television in the observation area showing our additional live YouTube streaming. This has not been without challenges, but people being concerned showed us the importance of this coverage. When the system is not refreshed, or if the livestream link breaks, people quickly called in to let us know about it. We are continuing to troubleshoot this system, to foresee problems in coverage. Fortunately, when we ran a security analysis, we were able to ensure that absolutely nobody had entered the office after we had left. We were able to encourage voter and observer confidence by producing evidence. The public did not just have to take our word for this; we had proof of the integrity of our security system. Optimally, having a crash-proof livestream is our first priority, so we are working very diligently with our communications and technology staff to figure out what we can do to ensure that before the 2024 cycle. Providing that transparency is something we think is important to our voters.

The current voter registration and election management system used in Washoe County is an unsupported system [page 9, [Exhibit K](#)], meaning the vendor who supplied our system no longer issues programming updates. Our hope is that we can purchase a new system so that the tracking we must do will no longer be manual. Our current system does not allow for the accommodations required by the changes in the election laws. For example, to be able to say that by law we can accept ballots for four days after the election, we must actually check every ballot in on Election Day. We received 13,000 ballots on election night. Our current system requires us to utilize a multitude of different systems to track different things. We have a different system for tracking poll workers. Our equipment, including our poll books, operates out of a different system, which communicates with our voter registration and elections management systems but is really a separate system in and of itself. Being able to report data requires it being pulled from multiple sources. Of course, this also causes delays in responding to public records requests. I have been working with our board of county commissioners on the budget requests that we would need to purchase a new system so that we can address these concerns ahead of the state top-down system. We strongly support the state top-down system, but we simply cannot wait through two election cycles for the state to implement their system. We are going into a contract with the state's proposed vendor on our own and then transitioning into their program. Once our system is upgraded and the state's system is implemented, we feel that the transparency the voters have requested will be in place.

We need to address a problem that occurred between our primary and general elections. We lost eight vote centers in large supermarkets we had used for many years. These were great sites for voting centers due to factors such as visibility, parking, accessibility, and familiarity to our voters. Luckily, we were able to acquire two facilities within the six-week time frame, but it still left us with a lack of facilities. We are currently working with our district attorney's office to strengthen the contracts we use to establish voting centers so that it is more difficult to cancel a contract with us.

We also need to expand our election worker recruitment. This has been a common theme from all the presenters tonight and is especially important for Washoe County because our volume is so high. As with the other presenters, one of our major problems finding election workers is that, after 2020, people just do not want to be poll workers. We are planning to try to recruit people by explaining that being a poll worker is just one of the ways people can help with elections. There are a multitude of responsibilities, jobs, and positions that are available to election workers. Working on helping to explain to the public the multiple opportunities to participate in the process could possibly make election work more interesting to a greater number of people.

Another common theme remarked upon tonight concerned staff turnover. We had an almost complete staff turnover in the Washoe County Registrar of Voters Office coming into the last election. I only have two remaining staff members who were with me during the 2020 election. Working an election is rewarding, but it is also demanding, requires long hours, and can be extremely stressful. I am working with our board of county commissioners to increase my staffing requirements. This increase would help to create better redundancies and give staff a better balance between work life and home. The fact is that, without an increase in staffing, I will have to require my current staff to work 7 days a week, 12 hours a day, for almost the entire year prior to the upcoming election. As you can imagine, burnout is a constant problem.

Our county manager brought in a third-party group that is assessing how we performed during the 2022 election to show us where we can do better as a department [page 10, [Exhibit K](#)]. This assessment will look at every function of our department, then make recommendations based on national best practices to help us function better. Something that this group has already identified is the need to change candidate filing, with a recommendation that candidates must give their filing information to us in a more timely manner. When candidates are not forthcoming, it puts very restrictive timelines on my office as well as our vendors. Ballots must be printed accurately so printers and mailing deadlines are impacted. Voting machines for in-person voting must be programmed to correctly reflect who is on the ballot, so they are impacted. Everyone involved in the pre-election process needs time to do their jobs accurately. Candidates filing at the last minute impacts everyone involved in a negative manner.

In addition to the implementation of processes mentioned previously, we also are looking at an expansion of our bilingual material [page 11, [Exhibit K](#)]. This includes increased accessibility features both on our website and in our written documents. Most, but not all, of our materials are bilingual, so we really need to ensure that all our materials are bilingual. We are also going to be reviewing our voter precincts and alignment as well. Due to a delay in when we received the new maps, we were forced to use the precincts meeting the last statutory size, not the increased size. We used to have precincts that were aligned more closely with where you live. For example, if you lived in Sparks, you could assume that you knew your precinct number. Reno was another example where you could probably assume your precinct guess was correct. That really is not the case anymore. We must ensure that

our voters now know who they can vote for based on this realignment. Finally, we have continued to struggle with voter identification. Election workers often had difficulty helping explain what, and in what circumstance, voter ID was required. Getting the information out to my staff and on to the public in a timely, easily understood manner helps everyone.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Are there any questions from the Committees? Seeing none, we are ready for public comment. [Public comment was heard.]

Are there any comments from our members? [There were none.] I know this was a long meeting, but I feel these presentations were very important. Members of the Senate Legislative Operations and Elections Committee, thank you for joining us. It was a fantastic job sharing our joint meeting today. For members of my Committee, we will not be meeting on Thursday. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 21, at 4 p.m. This meeting is adjourned [at 7:03 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Kristi Howard  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow, Chair

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

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Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair

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

## EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a letter dated February 14, 2023, submitted by Pamela Goynes-Brown, Mayor, City of North Las Vegas, in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session.

[Exhibit D](#) is written testimony submitted by Attorney General Aaron Ford, in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session.

[Exhibit E](#) is a packet of letters in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 10 of the 81st Session.

[Exhibit F](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Clark County Election Department," submitted and presented by Lorena Portillo, Assistant Registrar of Voters, Election Department, Clark County.

[Exhibit G](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Nevada Indian Commission," submitted and presented by Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission.

[Exhibit H](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Carson City Elections," submitted and presented by William "Scott" Hoen, Clerk-Recorder, Carson City.

[Exhibit I](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Douglas County Elections," submitted and presented by Amy Burgans, Clerk-Treasurer, Douglas County.

[Exhibit J](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Election Presentation," submitted and presented by Tami Rae Spero, County Clerk, Humboldt County.

[Exhibit K](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Registrar of Voters," submitted and presented by Jamie Rodriguez, Registrar of Voters, Washoe County.

[Exhibit L](#) is a document titled "Life of a Ballot," submitted by Jamie Rodriguez, Registrar of Voters, Washoe County.