

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

**Eighty-second Session
March 7, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair James Ohrenschall at 3:55 p.m. on Tuesday, March 7, 2023, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair
Senator Skip Daly, Vice Chair
Senator Heidi Seevers Gansert
Senator Lisa Krasner

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Howard Watts, Assembly District No. 15

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nicolas Anthony, Policy Analyst
Barbara Young, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Miguel Gonzales, Walker Basin Conservancy
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Nevada Conservation League
Tom Clark, United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra
Jeff Bryant
Leslie A. Mix, Sierra Nevada Job Corps Center
Zanny Marsh, Executive Director, Nevada Volunteers
Randy Soltero, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

Assemblyman Watts will present Senate Bill (S.B.) 87 which came out of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

SENATE BILL 87: Revises provisions relating to state employment. (BDR 23-343)

ASSEMBLYMAN HOWARD WATTS (Assembly District No. 15):

The genesis of this bill was based on some comments received at one of the Interim Standing Committee's Public Land Subcommittee meetings from the Walker Basin Conservancy. There are certain noncompetitive eligibility programs for people doing conservation work through AmeriCorps and other programs to achieve employment positions in federal government. Similar provisions do not exist in the State government. This bill tries to create some alignment between State and federal government and create a stronger pathway into State service for those already interested in public service. The bill includes AmeriCorps which has noncompetitive eligibility into the federal government for two years following the completion of a worker's term.

MIGUEL GONZALES (Walker Basin Conservancy):

I have a history of working with conservation organizations in AmeriCorps programs in Nevada, including the Walker Basin Conservancy, Nevada Conservation Corps and Great Basin Institute, as well as programs in other states. A bonus of public service and what those AmeriCorps members do for the community and the public good translates into preferential hiring status at the federal level. The root of this bill is to offer similar perks and benefits at the State level. AmeriCorps programs have benefits for Nevada. Our programs are focused on conservation, natural resource protection, and helping to restore and maintain public lands. There are a wide range of other programs as well. Those programs are within health and human services, education and development, working with underserved communities and helping at-risk youth.

Senate Bill 87 helps AmeriCorps members living in the State to enter the workforce by providing entry level skills, experiences, job skills training and development and transitioning them into State service. This would provide a career pathway for young people. As far as conservation, we have a pipeline for people to go into jobs in the U.S. Forest Service or the various Department of Interior agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, but we do not have a similar pipeline for jobs in Nevada division of State Parks or other positions

within our State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or Department of Wildlife.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATTS:

In section 1 of S.B. 87, *Nevada Revised Statutes* 284 gives additional eligibility for noncompetitive status if AmeriCorps volunteers meet the minimum qualifications for a position. They must have successfully completed at least 900 hours of service in an AmeriCorps program in the State within two years of applying for that position. A conceptual amendment ([Exhibit C](#)) adds Job Corps and Youth Conservation Corps programs to the AmeriCorps program.

Job Corps seeks to provide training and employment opportunities to at-risk young people. There is a Job Corps Center in northern Nevada that also includes the Youth Conservation Corps, which falls within the federal public land's noncompetitive eligibility status. Finally, the provisions of this bill would include an amendment to ensure that the experiences the individuals had through these programs is aligned with the qualifications of the jobs they are seeking in the State.

SENATOR KRASNER:

Would a person who is not a graduate of AmeriCorps be able to hold any of the positions in the classified service?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATTS:

In order to be eligible to apply for positions and compete for those positions, qualifications must be met. Anyone can seek a position regardless of participation in AmeriCorps. This bill is looking to align programs we already have in the federal government. Senate Bill 87 would make someone eligible to be appointed to a position without having to go through the competitive process if all qualifications are met and a term of service in one of the volunteer programs is completed. We want to ensure experience is aligned with the position. We are trying to give young people who are interested in service a leg up when getting into State government.

SENATOR KRASNER:

Could you give an example of what a position in the classified service would be?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATTS:

One example in conservation would be a position in the Division of State Parks. Within the social services realm there are a range of entry level positions. People may want to enter State service after completing a term of volunteer service through AmeriCorps.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I am questioning the qualification that the 900 hours had to be no more than 2 years before the person applied for a position. Are our hands tied by federal law or could we go beyond that to 5 years, if someone had the 900 hours?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATTS:

That does mirror federal language. The two-year requirement is firm. The goal is providing a pipeline for someone to be eligible for an entry level position and build a career in public and government service. We want to spur people from volunteer positions into State service.

CHRISTI CABRERA-GEORGESON (Nevada Conservation League):

We support S.B. 87. We think it is a great bill and will keep people who care about these issues in Nevada to fill our conservation agencies.

TOM CLARK (United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra):

We support this piece of legislation. I served on the Board of Directors for Friends of Black Rock-High Rock, and we rely on our AmeriCorps volunteers. They do tremendous work around the State and are an asset to us.

JEFF BRYANT:

We offer our full support to S.B. 87. I have spent my career working in AmeriCorps programs. The diversity of AmeriCorps programs in the State addresses a multitude of community needs. These essential programs provide pathways for idealistic, early career adults to gain meaningful work experience. Nevada loses key demographics of talented, workforce participants. This bill helps to mitigate this loss by being able to retain and engage a workforce to benefit industries across Nevada. Creating a pipeline to retain AmeriCorps alumni would help fill vacant positions across State government, which would give a recruitment advantage over our neighboring states to attract and retain talented individuals.

LESLIE A. MIX (Sierra Nevada Job Corps Center):

We are in support of S.B. 87, particularly with the Job Corps component. We serve youth from 16 years to 24 years of age throughout the State and train them in the trades. It is a total wraparound services program. We have a high success rate with our youth who are coming out of poverty and are underrepresented. This would be a great bill to help our youth get into career paths that would benefit the State.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I have a high opinion of your program, having worked with youth in Clark County who have gone through your program. Do many of the Job Corps graduates have the 900 hours to qualify?

Ms. MIX:

Yes, they do have the hours. We train them well.

ZANNY MARSH (Executive Director, Nevada Volunteers):

On behalf of Nevada Volunteers, I support this bill. We are the administrator of AmeriCorps funds in Nevada. AmeriCorps members are dedicating approximately 1,700 hours of service during their time in the program. They are living and serving in Nevada communities in areas that include environmental stewardship and access to health care, healthy living services and education. We have AmeriCorps members who are looking to build and begin careers in the State they have been serving. This bill will provide a pathway for those members to stay here and continue to contribute to the State and to our communities.

RANDY SOLTERO (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees):

I am testifying in neutral on S.B. 87 as we are working with the bill sponsor and all parties on this amendment. We are optimistic we will come to support this bill.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATTS:

I am confident we will work through the few remaining issues in S.B. 87. There are many needs and opportunities which bring people into fulfilling careers in State service and harness the passion they are bringing by being involved in these volunteer programs.

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CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

We have also received a letter in support of S.B. 87 ([Exhibit D](#)). Since there is no public comment, we are adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Barbara Young,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 87	C	3	Assemblyman Howard Watts	Conceptual Amendment
S.B. 87	D	6	Senator James Ohrenschall	Letter of Support