

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

**Eighty-Third Session
February 27, 2025**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Venicia Considine at 8:33 a.m. on Thursday, February 27, 2025, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 1 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, 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/83rd2025.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Venicia Considine, Chair
Assemblymember Duy Nguyen, Vice Chair
Assemblymember Max E. Carter II
Assemblymember Rich DeLong
Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva
Assemblymember Rebecca Edgeworth
Assemblymember Tanya P. Flanagan
Assemblymember Danielle Gallant
Assemblymember Heather Goulding
Assemblymember Bert K. Gurr
Assemblymember Linda F. Hunt
Assemblymember Jovan A. Jackson
Assemblymember Venise Karris
Assemblymember Heidi Kasama

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem, Assembly District No. 34

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alex Drozdoff, Committee Policy Analyst
Sarah Delap, Committee Counsel



Judi Bishop, Committee Manager
Karri Hurwitz, Committee Secretary
Mary Whalen, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Lali Parasa, President/Director, India Arts & Cultural Center in Northern Nevada
Rokai Yusufzai, Founder and CEO, ARY Foundation, Islamic Association of Las Vegas
Alejandro Rodriguez, Director, Government Relations, Nevada System of Higher Education
Austin Daly, Manager, Government Affairs, University of Nevada, Reno
Caitlin Gatchalian, Chair, Asian American Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus, Nevada
Mohammed Selim, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Zach Bucher, Manager, Government Affairs, City of North Las Vegas
Catherine Francisco, President and Founder, Asian American Pacific Islander Chamber of Commerce of Southern Nevada
Evan Louie, Board Chairman, One API, Nevada
Shubhangi Vyawahare, Private Citizen
Utkarsha Sinha, Private Citizen
Jayanti Sarkar, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Mohammad Nadeem-Tariq, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Annette Magnus, representing Asian Community Development Council
Fayyaz Raja, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
[unintelligible], Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Sharifa Wahab, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Brijesh Raval, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Shiva Goswami, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Arun Gupta, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Divya Narala, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Emily Shah, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Deep Goswami, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Vivek Deshpande, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Radhika Kunnell, Member, South-Asian Women's Alliance of Nevada
Anurag Mehta, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Phan Nguyen, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
[unintelligible], Private Citizen
Zain Raja, Private Citizen, Nevada
Carmen Isa, Private Citizen
Houda Hajji, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Nadia, Private Citizen
Mindy Nguyen Grover, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Angelyn Tabala, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Kanybek Umetaliyev, Private Citizen

Jyoti Joshi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Mohan Achanta, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ashok Goyal, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Doug Roberts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ajit Joshi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Pratik Dudhia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
[unintelligible], Private Citizen
Nicholas Klein, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ana Nakeem, Private Citizen:
Brandy Simper, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
[unintelligible], Private Citizen
Noura Ali, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Nadia, Private Citizen
Astra, Private Citizen
Muhammad Faraz Akber, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Aamna Chaudhry, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Ashley Garza Kennedy, Principal Management Analyst, Government Affairs,
Department of Administrative Services, Clark County
Billy Samuels, Fire Chief, Clark County Office of Emergency Management
Misty Richardson, Assistant Emergency Manager, Clark County
Christopher M. Ries, Police Detective, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Misty Robinson, Public Health Preparedness Supervisor, Southern Nevada Health
District
Tennille K. Pereira, Esq., Director, Resiliency & Justice Center
David Cherry, Government Affairs Manager, City of Henderson
Tyler J. Winkler, Esq., Supervising Attorney, Resilience & Justice Center
Taylor Allison, Director, Emergency Management and Government Affairs, Lyon
County
Ryan Beaman, Vice President, Professional Fire Fighters of Nevada
Lorea Arostegui, Mass Victimization Advocate, Office of Emergency Management
and Resiliency Center, Clark County
Patrick D. Kelly, President and CEO, Nevada Hospital Association

Vice Chair Nguyen:

[Roll was taken. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] Today we will hear two bills. First, we will hear Assembly Bill 82, which requires the Governor to proclaim certain days of observance; then Assembly Bill 50, which revises provisions relating to victims of a mass casualty incident. I will now open the hearing on A.B. 82. To present this measure we have our very own Assemblymember D'Silva as well as Assemblymember Nadeem. Please go ahead when you are ready.

**Assembly Bill 82: Requires the Governor to proclaim certain days of observance.
(BDR 19-60)**

Assemblymember D'Silva:

Good morning, Chair Considine and Vice Chair Nguyen, acting Chair today. Thank you for this opportunity to present Assembly Bill 82. I also want to thank a cosponsor, Assemblymember Nadeem, for presenting alongside me this morning. This bill will add several religious and cultural holidays to the official list of days held in observance in Nevada.

These days are Diwali Day, Eid al-Fitr Day, Vaisakhi Day, and Vesak Day. These are the central religious holidays to some of the largest faith traditions in the world and the communities that are today some of the fastest growing in the state of Nevada. I will be calling upon Ms. Lali Parasa of the Indian Arts & Cultural Center in Northern Nevada to give a brief overview of the four religious and cultural holidays this bill seeks to bring to the calendar of observed days. I will then invite Mr. Rokai Yusufzai, of the Islamic Association of Las Vegas, who is in Las Vegas, and Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem to highlight why this particular bill is important to these growing Nevada communities and how it adds to the overall cultural awareness and cultural consciousness of the state. After their remarks, I will quickly and briefly describe the mechanics of the bill. I will now invite Ms. Lali Parasa to further elaborate on why this bill was brought forward and to also discuss the meaning of these religious and cultural holidays.

Lali Parasa, President/Director, India Arts & Cultural Center in Northern Nevada:

The India Arts and Cultural Center is a nonprofit organization which we started in 2024 to promote India's rich culture and heritage. We have our own cultural center here, we do a lot of activities and programs in the center. I invite everybody to visit our center if you have time during these sessions when you are here in Carson City.

Moving forward to the bill, I would like to explain about the importance of all the holidays we have here which are very, very rich for us and have great value to all of us, starting with the Diwali Festival. Diwali is also known as the festival of lights. It is one of the most widely celebrated holidays in the USA and among Indian communities worldwide. It typically falls between mid-September and mid-November depending on the lunar calendar and is celebrated by millions of people across various religions including Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists across the world.

Significance of this festival. We do light lamps on this day of the festival. We exchange gifts; we distribute sweets and have feast with our friends and families and extended families together. We bring community and have family gatherings, large gatherings with cultural festival, and it is a big festival for us. It is like a Christmas for us. We observe religious observance that day. In Diwali, in modern times, in the last 20 years, this has been a traditional religious and cultural aspect of central modern celebrations which include elaborate parties, public events, and global recognition of the holiday. Global observance through Diwali originated in India. It is now celebrated in various parts of the world, especially where large Indian communities live, such as in the United States, Canada, United

Kingdom, Australia, and parts of Africa as well. Many of these communities hold public Diwali events, showcasing Indian culture, music, dance, food to promote cultural understanding.

I would like to conclude; This Diwali holiday, it is a very joyous holiday that celebrates hope, renewal, and togetherness. It is not just a religious event but also a cultural festival, one that fosters a spirit of unity, peace, and celebration. The symbolism of light conquers darkness resonates universally, making Diwali a time for people to reflect, reconnect, and rejoice.

Coming to the next festival, Eid al-Fitr. Eid is one of the most important religious holidays celebrated by the Muslim community worldwide. Eid al-Fitr is often referred to as the festival of breaking the fast and is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. Ramadan is observed by Muslims as a time for self-reflection, spiritual growth, prayer, and fasting from dawn until sunset. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of this month-long fast and is a time of thanksgiving to Allah for the strength and patience shown during Ramadan.

Significance of this festival. Eid al-Fitr is a celebration of both the end of the fasting period and the renewal of faith. It is a time to give thanks to Allah for the spiritual cleansing achieved through fasting, prayer, and reflection. Muslims all over believe that fasting during Ramadan helps to purify their soul, develop empathy for the less fortunate, and strengthen community bonds. As a global observance, Eid is celebrated worldwide by the Muslim community, although customs and traditions may vary slightly by region and culture. Eid is a public holiday with large gatherings for prayers, feast, and festivities. Eid is often celebrated within communities, with prayers held at local mosques and cultural centers. Eid is a time of joy, gratitude, and togetherness, whether it is the end of Ramadan during Eid al-Fitr or the act of sacrifice and charity to reflect the values of community. Eid represents both a spiritual renewal and an opportunity to strengthen bonds with family, friends, and communities at large.

Coming to the third festival. Vaisakhi, which is also spelled as Baisakhi, is an important cultural and religious festival primarily celebrated in India, particularly by Sikhs and Hindus, as well as by people in other countries or other parts of the world. It marks the beginning of the harvest season and holds special significance for different communities, particularly in Punjab, where it is widely celebrated.

Significance of Vaisakhi. For Sikh people—I mean like S-i-k-h-s, which is a Sikh category—Vaisakhi is a deeply religious occasion as it commemorates the formation of the Khalsa, the collective body of initiated Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. On this day, Guru Gobind Singh called upon his followers to demonstrate their commitment to Sikh values by baptizing them into the Khalsa. For Hindus, Vaisakhi is a harvest festival celebrating the arrival of the new season. It is seen as a time of thanksgiving for the harvest and many regions in India, particularly in Punjab, and northern Indian states celebrated it with vibrant festivities. Vaisakhi and the Sikh community identity is particularly significant for Sikhs because of its

role in defining the Sikh identity. The formation of the Khalsa on this day is a key event in Sikh history. The Khalsa symbolizes the value of equality, justice, and service to humanity.

I would like to conclude this holiday. Vaisakhi is a vibrant joyous festival with rich religious culture and historical significance for Sikhs. It marks the foundation of their identity through the Khalsa, while for Hindus, it signifies the celebration of the harvest and the beginning of a new agricultural cycle. These festivals strengthen bond within families, communities, and the global Sikh and Hindu diaspora, and remains as an occasion of hope, prosperity, and unity among us.

The last festival, Vaisakhi, also called Vesak, is one of the most important holidays in the Buddhist calendar and is celebrated by millions of Buddhists around the world. It commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death or Parinirvana, of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Significance of Vesak, also known as Buddha Jayanti, is the most important festival in Buddhism. It is a celebration of the life and teachings of Buddha, marking three key events: the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the enlightenment of Buddha, and the death of Buddha, which is Parinirvana. Vesak also commemorates the day when the Buddha passed away at the age of 80 achieving Parinirvana, which is the final release from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This signifies the completion of his journey, having attained ultimate peace and liberation. Vesak is widely celebrated in countries with a Buddhist population.

The universal message of this religious significance for Buddhist is it is a message of peace, compassion, and mindfulness, which resonates universally. The Buddha's teachings encourage the practice of mindfulness, compassion, and all living beings' understanding that life is transient, reminding people to live in the present moment and cultivate peace within themselves and in their communities. The conclusion is, Vesak is a time of great religious significance for Buddhists around the world. It is not only a celebration of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death, but also a time of reflection, meditation, and recommitment. Vesak brings people together to celebrate the Buddha's teachings to foster a deeper connection with compassion, peace, and understanding.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

Now we will have Mr. Rokai Yusufzai in Las Vegas.

Rokai Yusufzai, Founder and CEO, ARY Foundation, Islamic Association of Las Vegas:

As-salamu alaykum, peace and blessings be upon you. Good morning, distinguished Chair and Assemblymembers. When my children were young, I would take them to a park where they were celebrating Easter. They would play, and they would have a great time collecting eggs. They would come at the end of it and ask me, Father, how come we do not get to celebrate our holidays? Why is it that we cannot celebrate a special day in this country that we are born into? I will tell them have patience; the time will come. We have been working very hard for our community at large, as part of the interfaith, at-large council, to be able to celebrate a day of dignity, a day of joy, a day we can claim that is ours.

The relevance of being able to vote for this bill as a yes, it is so important for all of us living in Nevada to make this our home for the future of our generation. What you are doing today, you are making history. An Arabic word would be Sadaqah Jariyah. This is like you are planting a tree, and that tree grows. When that tree grows, people will come together and sit underneath the tree and enjoy the shade it has provided. When the time comes we are long gone, I will be gone, my kids will be gone, my future generations will be gone, but this bill will exist. It will be recognized for all, from all knowing the fact that we, the at-large community, came together and made something happen. I humbly ask of all of you, please consider this bill and vote yes on this bill. It is extremely important for our community, our city, our state of Battle-Born, "Home means Nevada." I thank you, I appreciate you.

I represent the Muslim community. I am the community liaison between the Muslim community and our interfaith and everyone else in Las Vegas. I have represented Las Vegas for quite some time, over 25 years of working with different nonprofit organizations. I am the founder of Masjid-E Tawheed, one of the founders of the Islamic Association of Las Vegas. I am the CEO of ARY Foundation. We help a lot of the refugees, whether it requires legal documentations, paperwork, food, assembly, homeless, providing food, shelter, whatever we can do to provide the source and resources and direct them to the right organizations. I have been involved with the local law enforcement's different divisions to provide a service for our community. We have worked very hard to be here. Again, we need your help. We need your support to vote yes.

Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem, Assembly District No. 34:

I am the first Muslim American to serve in the Nevada State Legislature. I am very happy to cosponsor Assembly Bill 82. The bill is testament to Nevada's commitment to inclusion and diversity, opening the door to greater interfaith dialogue and respect. Like Assemblymember D'Silva, I am also a member of the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Legislative Caucus. As a member of the caucus, I recognize that the four faith traditions outlined in this bill are central aspects of Asian American culture, society, and heritage. As Nevada grows and becomes more diverse, it is important for our state calendar of recognized days of observance to reflect the makeup of today's Nevada. I also want to emphasize that the bill is written in a way that is educational in nature, calling for the Governor and appropriate government officers to bring to the attention of the residents of Nevada the contributions made to the state by adherents of these religions and cultural traditions. With that said, Vice Chair, I would like to turn things over to Assemblymember D'Silva, who will go over the technical aspects of this bill.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

This bill is pretty straightforward. It will require the Governor to recognize these various holidays as days of observance. The proclamation may call upon the news media, educators, business and labor leaders, and appropriate governmental offices to bring to the attention of the residents of Nevada the diversity and inclusion of the cultures that celebrate these various holidays in the state of Nevada and throughout the world. This bill is about inclusion and celebrates one of the strongest aspects of the Battle Born State, its diversity.

Assemblymember Jackson:

Given that these communities have been a valued community here for decades, what has been the factors that have delayed this bill from moving forward?

Assemblymember D'Silva:

That is a very good question. It is kind of in the vein of the commentary that was made by Mr. Yusufzai in Las Vegas. These communities have been in Nevada since the beginning. We have evidence that there were establishments, settlements, and migrants who came to Nevada in the 19th century. It is only now that we are able to bring this bill successfully forward. I think it is also a testament to smaller communities that exist in this state, having a seat at the table—myself being the first ever South Asian elected to any elected office in the state of Nevada; our first ever Muslim American serving the Legislature; our Vice Chair of this Committee, who is also a history-making member of the Vietnamese community. It is important that we are at the table and that is how we are able to bring these bills forward. Thank you for that. I think that is what took the time. We made it a priority.

Assemblymember Goulding:

Thank you so much for bringing the beauty and value of diverse religions to our attention. I really appreciate that. I wonder if you might consider adding to the bill a Golden Rule Day, which would reflect this universally shared value for both religious communities and nonreligious communities.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

I think that we can definitely look into that. This is my background. A little bit about myself, my background is in interfaith dialogue. Both of my master's degrees were in global affairs with the focus on the role that religion plays in the world, in international politics. That is an important thing to bring up, The Golden Rule, which is commonplace throughout all these different religious traditions, these spiritual traditions. I think it would be very appropriate. We will definitely consider that.

Assemblymember Karris:

Thank you for a wonderful, very thorough presentation explaining all of these wonderful cultures. I am so astounded that all of you have come together to bring this as a group to everyone to realize, in one bill, all the various things that we should celebrate. There is that common thread. You are all going for hope and better things in the future. Where is my question in all that? I absolutely want to know, when did you start coming together with four diverse religions? How long did it take to bring this forth? Because it is wonderful.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

Actually, I will defer the beginning portion of that question to Mr. Yusufzai, who is in Las Vegas, who has been working on this issue for more than three decades now. If you want to start with Mr. Yusufzai and his early experiences with trying to bring this bill forward.

Rokai Yusufzai:

I am the community liaison for the Muslim community at large. When I moved here in 1984, that is a few centuries ago, we did not have any place of worship. In the early 1980s, we had nothing. Then in the mid-1980s, we had one location. Now we have over 12 different mosques with different denominations of Islam. Our population has grown close to 100,000 people, and it is growing even more. We have a lot of families coming into Las Vegas; they are choosing Nevada for a reason. Why? Because they have a potential great future in this community. This is not something that happened overnight. As I mentioned, for the past several decades we have been working very hard to try to make something happen. I understand that sometimes good things take a little bit longer. We have had the patience, and we are here today, and we want to make sure that continuing, going forward, something good happens for our community, something positive happens for our community at large.

Assemblymember Nadeem:

Thank you so much for the great question and thank you for your encouragement. It means a lot to us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also want to give credit and thanks to the Democratic government, our great Speaker Steve Yeager, and Democratic caucus for believing in us and bringing us together. Thank you so much, everyone. It is not possible without all of you.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

I will just quickly close on this. This bill came from the community. It came from various town halls, various meetings we had, and this was a priority. When we ask, what does the community want to see in us as representatives of the community who are now finally serving in these bodies? This was a major priority to recognize our religious holidays, which means a lot to members of the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. That is what this bill is seeking to do. I also want to reiterate that this is not a holiday, a paid day off, or anything like that. It is simply a day that would be placed on a list of other observed days on the Nevada calendar where the Governor will make this proclamation.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thanks for bringing this bill, very informative. I appreciate it. It sounds like the intent of this bill is to add days of observance for a number of religions in the state. I noticed that the bill does not include any Jewish holidays. Would you guys be open to revising the bill to include Jewish holidays also?

Assemblymember D'Silva:

We will look into that. I know that there are some Jewish holidays that are already outlined in the days of observance of the state, and there are proclamations made from the Governor. We are willing to talk to all communities. Religious diversity in the end is a difficult thing to pinpoint. There are so many different religions, but then you have sects and other different variations of those faiths and of those traditions. I think we should be open as a state to recognize and to include the different faith communities and the different cultural communities that stem from those organized religions and unorganized aspects of faith. Thank you for that question and I will definitely consider that, Assemblymember.

Assemblymember Flanagan:

In the bill it notes different aspects of various months, but because they are calendars associated with the culture, it is unclear to me exactly what months the days of recognition would take place in? The Sikh calendar appears to be March to March, and the Hindu seems to be based on certain auspicious days and inauspicious days, and then the Islamic calendar is based on the moon's cycle. Can you help us understand which days and when it would take place?

Assemblymember D'Silva:

We did have an extensive conversation about this; this is again a calendar that is not Western in orientation. It is from a different culture and these are calendars that go back millennia. We are talking about more than 2,000 years, and in some cases close to 4,000-5,000 years. They are based upon lunar and solar calendars. We do know when these dates will fall. It is similar to Easter in the Christian tradition. I believe Easter is technically—correct me if I am wrong, I know we have some researchers here on the panel—the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. It will fall under different days. There is not a set date like Christmas is December 25, but then the other major Christian holiday, Easter, falls on different days. That is also because of the fact that it is based upon a lunar calendar. We know exactly when these dates will fall. There is, I believe, now and then—the Eid is a good example here—you have the holiday twice in one year according to the Western calendar. In that sense, I believe that the bill will say that even if it falls twice in one year, that the Governor will still have to make the proclamation on that rare occasion when it does.

Assemblymember Flanagan:

I am not sure if I am clear which months, as a sense of reference, align with the Western calendar? Would it be September? Is it April? Is it July? I just want to be a little bit more clear.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

It is going to fall on different months, like Vaisakhi will fall in the spring. It technically falls in the middle of the month. This is all based upon the lunar and solar calendars that these traditions stem from. The Eid al-Fitr is the breaking of the fast on the last day of Ramadan, which could fall any time of the year, to be honest. Again, they are all based upon those cultural calendars, and they could fall at various different times of the year. Diwali is usually in the fall. It is the festival of lights. It falls anywhere from September, October, even November, if I am not mistaken. Again, there are not any set dates or even months. It is all based upon the solar and lunar calendars of those faith traditions.

Assemblymember DeLong:

I just want to make sure the record is correct. Looking at *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 236.018 through NRS 236.095, those are the periods of observance in the NRS. There are no Jewish holidays recognized in the period of observance or in the state holidays. As far as I can see, there is only one religious holiday currently either as a holiday or a period of observance, and that is Christmas.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

We will definitely look into that. We invite our members of the Jewish community to engage with us on this bill.

Vice Chair Nguyen:

I thank you for the presentation. I have a quick question myself. Like you said earlier, Assemblymember DeSilva, we have a lot of the holidays that are already printed on calendars. We grew up with it. It is commonly known, right? Because some of these holidays that you mentioned are not necessarily taught in school, or widely or commonly known, this is a way for us to be able to add the value. We are not taking anything away from anyone, but we are adding values into the diverse state that we have in the state of Nevada. Is that your intention, to get us more aware of our community and our neighbors, and lifting everyone up, and not just one community versus the other?

Assemblymember D'Silva:

That is exactly what this bill is trying to do. Oftentimes when you have a bill that brings a religious holiday or that conducts some kind of day of observance, there are a whole bunch of other groups, in a valid way, that also want to be involved. We had a conversation even within our own bill, there were talks of adding other holidays that are focused on the South Asian, Southeast Asian, and broader Asian and African diasporas, but we really focused on these because these are the big holidays. It is the main festival for the Sikh community, Vaisakhi, and Vesak for the Buddhist community, which again is the tripartite celebration of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death, and ascent into nirvana. For the Islamic community, Eid al-Fitr is the main celebration. It is like Christmas or Easter would be to Christians.

This is the conversation that we had, and this is why we settled on these four bills (*sic*); it is all about inclusion and it is all about education. That is why the way the bill is written, it is really focused on educating the public as to what these holidays mean, why these communities celebrate the holidays, and—this is an important tangent—to also make it known that if there is a student in a kindergarten through grade 12 classroom, or college, or an employee, that this is why the employee is asking for the day off. Last session we passed a very important bill that was sponsored by now Senator Angela Taylor that would allow for students to have an excused absence if they are taking that absence in celebration of a religious holiday. Again, this is a wider conversation that we are having about acceptance, inclusion, and in the end allowing people to be who they are, but to also be a hundred percent part of the state, the Nevadans, and Americans.

Vice Chair Nguyen:

Next, we will hear testimony on the bill.

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

The Nevada System of Higher Education is in support of this bill. We would like to thank Assemblymembers D'Silva and Nadeem for bringing it forward.

Austin Daly, Manager, Government Affairs, University of Nevada, Reno:

We are very proud of the diversity of our student body and we are very proud to be supporting A.B. 82. I want to thank Assemblymember D'Silva for bringing this bill forward and we hope that the Committee will support it as well.

Caitlin Gatchalian, Chair, Asian American Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus, Nevada:

I am the chair of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Democratic Caucus for the state of Nevada. As a caucus, we are excited to show our support for A.B. 82. The AAPI Democratic Caucus represents the full diaspora of the AAPI community and we know that our communities are woven into the fabric of the United States history. We are here. We have always been here. Recognizing Eid al-Fitr, Diwali, Vaisakhi, and Vesak is a long overdue acknowledgement of the traditions, faiths and cultures that shape the lives of millions of Americans in the United States. Seven out of ten Indian Americans celebrate Diwali. Islam is the third-largest religion in the country. Sikh and Buddhist communities have long contributed to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of our nation, yet these important holidays are still not officially recognized.

Assembly Bill 82 is not about a day on the calendar. It is about visibility, inclusion, and respect—to be seen, to be heard, to be recognized, and celebrated. This bill is a necessary next step for our community. We hope that in the future we are able to celebrate these holidays with you.

Mohammed Selim, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I represent the Bangladeshi-American Cultural Diversity Council. I have been living in Reno, Nevada since 1982. When I moved to this town in Washoe County, there were a handful of Muslims in the community. Now in Washoe County, there are over 3,000. I expect that to be doubled in five to ten years. Eid al-Fitr is one of the important holidays for the Muslim community in Washoe County. I would appreciate if Assemblymembers pass that bill. This will make it easier for the employee to ask for a day off to celebrate from the employer. Also, it will give us the opportunity to get an excused absence from the Washoe County School District. I want to thank all of you.

I hope you pass that bill. It will bring all interfaith religious people together, because when we do celebrate Eid al-Fitr at the local Mudik, we invite everybody. It is not only Muslim, it is Hindus, Christians, Jews, everybody. We invite every religion. We do have interfaith meetings at the local Mudik in Reno a couple of times a year. I want to assure you this will bring us together, not separate us. I hope you all pass that bill.

Zach Bucher, Manager, Government Affairs, City of North Las Vegas:

I want to thank the distinguished bill sponsors for bringing this bill. Our support is very simple. The city of North Las Vegas will always champion and support all members of our community, and this bill helps us do that.

Catherine Francisco, President and Founder, Asian American Pacific Islander Chamber of Commerce of Southern Nevada:

I am proud to express the support for A.B. 82. This bill is a powerful step toward embracing and celebrating the cultural and religious diversity that defines our state, ensuring that all communities feel seen, valued, and respected.

Evan Louie, Board Chairman, One API, Nevada:

I am here to testify in support of A.B. 82. In Nevada, we are the fastest growing Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander demographic in the United States. As board advisor to University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Reflections Project [Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander Oral History Project], we document Asian Americans' contributions in Nevada in the UNLV libraries. Assembly Bill 82 is about recognizing our culture, history, and religions as an integral part of our community traditions. As Mr. Yusufzai pointed out earlier, it is about making history. I believe I know your relative, Naweed Yusufzai. We have helped organize together in the Asian American community and Muslim community.

Last year in Nevada, I had the honor of being part of making history in Nevada and nationally for Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders. Our community came together nationally to produce the first Lunar New Year event for the Super Bowl. We changed the Las Vegas sign gold for Asian Pacific Heritage Month, and hosted the first national summit of Asian American, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander municipal, state, and federal electives from all over the country in Las Vegas with Assemblymember Duy Nguyen and Assemblymember Erica Mosca. These legislators have also passed similar laws in their respective states to observe these types of holidays. I have helped organize the first Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Leadership Summit with the White House, helping us make history here in Nevada for the Asian American community and acknowledging our culture, traditions, and religions. Assembly Bill 82 observes days for our Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh religious communities. We hope you join us in support of this bill in the Legislature.

Shubhangi Vyawahare, Private Citizen:

Thank you so much for letting us represent the bill here. I am part of the Indian Arts and Culture Center. I am a Hindu and I celebrate Diwali. Diwali is just not a celebration of one kind, but it is a celebration of good over evil. We also do a lot of things for wealth, health, and prosperity for everyone, and bring the culture together here to celebrate it together for all parts of the world. I support this bill, A.B. 82, because this is something that we have been observing for a long time and just like the person shared the story, we never get a holiday for that. What do we tell our kids? That we cannot get the holiday because we are not in our own home. That is the reason I really, really want everyone to celebrate all the cultures here, all the holidays, and all the observances for different religious activities here. I support the bill for that reason.

Utkarsha Sinha, Private Citizen:

I support this bill. Since childhood we have been celebrating this festival. It is part of our memories. It is part of our growing up. I want it to be a part of my children growing up. Please pass this bill. That is my humble request. Thank you so much and I am part of the IACCNN [Indian Arts and Cultural Center in Northern Nevada].

Jayanti Sarkar, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am Hindu and I am representing IACCNN. Of course, I have moved to U.S. recently, two years back, and after coming to the United States, I do miss my home and I do miss my festivals. After coming here, because Reno, Nevada is my new home, I miss all my festivals. After coming here, IACCNN has been celebrating Diwali and everything they are doing makes me feel at home. That is why I feel so glad about it. I would request every one of you if you can please pass the bill.

Mohammad Nadeem-Tariq, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am son of Hanadi Nadeem; please support my mother's bill.

Annette Magnus, representing Asian Community Development Council:

I will just say ditto to what the young man just said.

Fayyaz Raja, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I know it is a very important for the Committee to listen to all of us, but I do not want to waste too much time because you heard enough. I just want to emphasize I have been in Las Vegas for 45 years and we have been trying very hard for a long time. I think we had an opportunity now to ask all the Committee members to pass the bill. This bill will seek to recognize Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Vaisakhi, and Vesak as an official day of observation in the state of Nevada. I would like to ask the Committee members to pass this bill, and thank you very much for having me.

[unintelligible], Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am the president of Guru Nanak Gurdwara, the oldest Sikh temple in Las Vegas. We are here to support the Vaisakhi festival. Vaisakhi is a prominent Sikh festival that marks the worth of Sikhism. It is the supreme harvest, celebrated primarily in Punjab and in northern India. The festival is celebrated worldwide with the parades, food, entertainment, and the get together with the family and friends. This holiday is also observed by Hindus, known as the various religious names in the other part of India. Vaisakhi is always celebrated in the middle of April every year.

Early settlers from Punjab, back in the early 20th century in the California Central Valley near Yuba City and Sacramento, have celebrated Vaisakhi for over 100 years. Vaisakhi celebration began at the gurdwara, a place of worship for the sect. All gurdwaras are beautifully decorated for the religious services and faithful to the congregation. Many people enjoy the parade and the special procession through the [unintelligible], singing hymns from the Sikh holy Guru Granth Sahib. Our community's next Vaisakhi Festival, known as Las Vegas Indian Food Festival, we celebrate on Saturday, April 12, at the Clark County

Government Center Amphitheater. I invite you all to join us for the daylong celebration. In the past over 7,000 attendees enjoyed the festival with music, entertainment, and wide selection of Indian culinary delights, shopping, children activities, and others.

Sharifa Wahab, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here on behalf of the Muslim community and African community. I am here to support A.B. 82. I would like to thank Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva and Assemblymember Nadeem. Thank you so much for your hard work and I hope this bill pass. Thank you again for your time.

Brijesh Raval, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am working at Hindu and Jain Temple of Las Vegas as a priest. Diwali, is one of the most celebrated festivals worldwide; old, profound culture, religious and spiritual importance. Especially for over 1.5 billion Hindus; followers of Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism also celebrate it. Known as a festival of lights, Diwali represents the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. The festival is a joyous and profound spiritual celebration that unites people in families, communities, and even nations. I support this bill and I request everyone please pass this bill.

Shiva Goswami, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Dear honorable members of the Committee. I thank you for this opportunity to speak in favor of A.B. 82. On behalf of Nevada's growing Indian community, I would like to attest to the importance and cultural significance of inaugurating the Diwali as an official day of observance. The Diwali, also known as the festival of lights, is considered one of the most significant and iconic religious celebrations observed by millions of Indian Americans. Many states including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas are just a few of the growing number of states beginning to recognize this celebration as an official day of observance, giving Indian Americans their long overdue representation. Indian Americans have long been contributing to Nevada's rich cultural and economic diversity. A 2019 article by Nevada Business Magazine has estimated that there are around 21,000 Asian American-owned businesses in Nevada, a large contributor to that number being Indian Americans. This number has in all likelihood grown since then. Culturally, Nevada is home to several Indian American culture groups such as the Gujarati Samaj, Friends of India hosting celebrations attended by hundreds.

We, as both the state and country, pride ourselves on our historic melting pot of culture and diversity, and recognizing Diwali as an official day of observance aligns with the core values and ideals of both our country and state. Celebrating the Diwali officially aligns with the values of community, family, and social harmony. By marking the Diwali as an official day of observance we are giving Nevada's largely growing Indian population their due representation as well as recognizing its significance and values and rejoicing unity and goodwill. This initiative, to pass Diwali as an official day of observance, will underscore Nevada's commitment to inclusivity and diversity. Passing A.B. 82 will not only represent and empower members of the Indian American community, but also serve as a reminder that

our state's diversity is a source of pride and enrichment. On behalf of the younger generation of Indian Americans, I implore this bill be passed.

[Assemblymember Considine assumed the Chair at 9:25 a.m.]

Chair Considine:

I see there are a number of people in Las Vegas who want to testify. In the interest of time, if you would like to say your name, and if your comments are the same, please say ditto so we can get everybody's name on the record. We would appreciate that. Thank you.

Arun Gupta, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am an attorney in Las Vegas. I am supporting Diwali festival here. It is like Christmas for us Hindus, and every year we participate in a lot of celebrations. I have been associated with the Friends of India and Hindu temple in the past. We really request all the Assemblymembers to support this bill.

Divya Narala, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here on behalf of A.B. 82. First and foremost, I want to thank the sponsors, Reuben D'Silva and Assemblymember Hanadi Nadeem, for bringing this forward. Much like what everybody else said, just want to state this proposed legislation builds on Nevada's legacy of celebrating communities who are proud to call Nevada home, and continues to honor the South Asian community and the broader AANHPI community as we continue to have a broader representation here in Nevada. As a proud Nevadan and South Asian, we urge the members of this Committee to advance A.B. 82.

Emily Shah, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a first generation Indian American and I support A.B. 82. I am an actress and entrepreneur, and I grew up in a multicultural household with my mother being Christian and my father being Hindu. I grew up in the state of New Jersey, which recognized Diwali as an official holiday. Recognizing Diwali in Nevada is more than just a symbolic gesture. It is about making people feel seen, valued, and included. I am proud to say I grew up in a state that recognized me, and as I lay my roots here in the beautiful state of Nevada, I would like to see my future children say the same. Representation matters, and this bill is an opportunity to take a meaningful step towards inclusivity in Nevada.

Deep Goswami, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am Chief Deputy City Attorney with the City Attorney's Office in North Las Vegas. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My daughter had an opportunity to testify before all of you today and I think that speaks volumes to me. Growing up in a small west Texas town, I did not have this kind of opportunity and to see her be able to do it is wonderful. I am in support of the bill.

Vivek Deshpande, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am representing Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh. I am proud to support this bill with bringing the interfaith community together to recognize our faith, culture, and community. This brings

acknowledging "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" the whole world is our family. As a part of Diwali, we also celebrate the SewaDiwali, which is service to divinity. Service to society is a service to divinity and it is getting celebrated across 30ish states. Thank you so much. I am supporting this bill.

Radhika Kunnel, Member, South-Asian Women's Alliance of Nevada:

I am speaking for the record in my capacity as a proud member of South-Asian Women's Alliance of Nevada. I would like to extend my gratitude to our sponsors and echo the statements previously made in support of this initiative. I want to specially make a special emphasis on the importance of the education component; as we know, education is power. Thank you for supporting this bill.

Chair Considine:

We need to switch to the phones to get support from the phones and then we will come back to Las Vegas.

Anurag Mehta, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a physician by profession. I thank the Assembly for hearing us, as well as Assemblymember D'Silva and Assemblymember Nadeem for requesting this bill. In addition to what everybody else has said, I would also like to note that there is economic benefits to our society. When we observe these cultural events, these attract visitors, boosting local businesses and tourism. I want to support this bill as well as request the Assembly to support this bill and pass the bill.

Phan Nguyen, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I have been a practicing Vegas dentist for 23 years. My family and I as well as Assemblymember Rebecca Edgeworth have been active members of the Tzi Chi Buddhist Foundation since 2016. We provide free medical, dental, and vision care to the low-income and underserved community of Las Vegas. Our core value of compassion and humility is taught through the teaching of the Buddha and motivates us to help the less fortunate in our community. Having Buddha Day recognized by the state of Nevada and passage of A.B. 82 will spread the teaching of compassion and peace to all Nevadans.

[unintelligible], Private Citizen:

I just wanted to say I am so grateful to all of you for having this meeting today. I am in support of this bill and this would be a dream come true for all of us here in Nevada.

Zain Raja, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am just calling you to call my support for bill A.B. 82. Basically ditto, that is all.

Carmen Isa, Private Citizen:

I vote yes, for A.B. 82.

Houda Hajji, Private Citizen, Nevada:

I am testifying on behalf of my family, which consists of three people including myself. Thank you, Assemblymember D'Silva for bringing this bill forward as a Muslim woman and mother to a Muslim student in Clark County. I support this bill for our community of South Asian and Muslim holidays to be observed and to ensure students to do not have to miss their traditional religious holidays and celebrations due to a lack of understanding of the diversity in Nevada. This is a great example to show that Nevada is growing and changing. Again, thank you to Assemblymember D'Silva and the Chair for this bill. Thank you, Assemblymember Nadeem, as well.

Nadia, Private Citizen:

I am here to testify [inaudible] bill A.B. 82. I already [inaudible] Eid al-Fitr [inaudible] holidays to be observed officially by the state of Nevada.

Chair Considine:

We will move back to Las Vegas for those in support. Again, if your support statement is the same as someone who has already stated, please feel free to say ditto.

Mindy Nguyen Grover, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am representing UuDam Temple, a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple here in Las Vegas. Together with me today is master [inaudible] and few of the members of [inaudible] Buddhist temple here in Las Vegas. We are here to support A.B. 82. Buddhist is our main religion. Buddha has been around for over 2,500 years. Buddha brings peace, love, compassion, and wisdom to everyone and brings everyone together. We humbly ask you to pass this A.B. 82. Thank you so much for your support and pass up this bill and may you and your family be blessed.

Angelyn Tabala, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Ditto to the support of testimony given today and I urge you to support A.B. 82.

Kanybek Umetaliyev, Private Citizen:

I represent the Muslim community, Central Asian diaspora, and I support this bill. I support A.B. 82.

Jyoti Joshi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Good morning, Hare Krishna. I am here to support A.B. 82.

Mohan Achanta, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Good morning. My name is Mohan Achanta. I am the president of Hindu and Jain Temple of Las Vegas and also president of two south Indian [unintelligible] association. I support this bill and be of all people. Thank you.

Ashok Goyal, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

On behalf of all of the Indian community in Las Vegas, I request all the members to please pass the A.B. 82.

Doug Roberts, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I just wanted to show up today to show support for this bill. I will ditto everything everyone else said.

Ajit Joshi, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am here in support of A.B. 82. Thank you very much for your time.

Pratik Dudhia, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am the Vice President of Hindu and Jain Temple of Las Vegas and vice president of Friends of India-Las Vegas. I am here to support bill A.B. 82. Thank you, Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva.

Rokai Yusufzai:

I just wanted to share, Madam Chair and Assemblymembers, last year in Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department headquarters, this was the first time that we had the lighting of the menorah. To be part of that event was amazing, it was beautiful as we all seek light in our life and more light and further light in our own personal life to make ourselves a better human being. This bill is part of that. We need more light in our community.

[unintelligible], Private Citizen:

My name is [unintelligible] representative for the Society for Pho Quang Buddhism in Las Vegas in 2015. I support A.B. 82.

Rokai Yusufzai:

Madam Chair, we do not have anyone else speaking here in Las Vegas. Thank you so much for your support.

Chair Considine:

Thank you for the support in Carson City, in Las Vegas, and over the phone. Is there anyone on the phones in support that we did not get to?

Nicholas Klein, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a born and bred Las Vegan. I would like to thank you all for hearing us today. I am in support of this bill. I did grow up wanting to practice my religion. My parents did not. They were atheists essentially, and fortunately for me, I was a Christian, so I never had to miss school or choose between going to school and practicing my religious practices. I do not want other children or other faiths or cultures of our society to have to make that decision. I recognize, as an attorney, that this law does not even provide a recognized holiday or day off, just a day of observance. I would encourage this Legislature, soon after, to recognize these as legal holidays and support measures doing so. Assemblymember DeLong, to address your question, this legislation was created by motivated community members who sought to have their deeply held religious beliefs recognized. For our Jewish friends, if they feel they are not represented in this regard, this may require more in-depth conversations with members of the Jewish groups in our community. I would certainly encourage you to please reach out and initiate legislation to that effect.

Ana Nakeem, Private Citizen:

I am part of the [unintelligible] class and teacher at Ibrahim. I would like to say as-salamu alaykum. This is a saying in Arabic reading that means peace be unto you, as it is said, is with our Christian brothers and sisters and our Catholic brothers and sisters. Peace be with you. What a blessing it would be to have this bill passed so we can share and stand in unity in all our faith and all of our journeys with Allah. This saying is also an Arabic word meaning God. On this special day, vote yes.

Brandy Simper, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am Christian here and have lived in Las Vegas for almost 25 years. I would like to express my support for this bill so that all of my friends of all faith may have their ability to ask for a day off from both work and school.

[unintelligible], Private Citizen:

I am a software engineer in the south [unintelligible] area. I support the bill. As the number of Asian Americans and even the Asians who live in this area have been steadily increasing, we would really appreciate that if there is an official recognition of Diwali, sending a clear message of inclusion and tolerance, which is our core values, where we can appreciate each other's cultures and learn from it as a community. Please support the bill.

Noura Ali, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a nurse here in Las Vegas. I am also Muslim and I would like everyone to support this bill. I support it. I think that as a nurse, I see how many medical professionals from different cultures and religions we have in Las Vegas. I also know that we have a little bit of a crisis when it comes to our medical situation here in Las Vegas. We do not have enough doctors and medical professionals. I think that supporting this bill would encourage more professionals to come and live and make Las Vegas and Nevada their home, for them to feel like their children can grow up in a community that has understanding and also knowledge, information, about other religions and cultures. I personally would like a reminder every year to learn about the different cultural celebrations. I do not know too much about them and you know, only my own, which is very sad, actually. I think that this would be a wonderful bill to pass.

Nadia, Private Citizen

This is Nadia. I am sorry, I am not sure if I am appearing for the second time. I am just here to support the holiday of Eid al-Fitr and all of the south Asian holidays to be observed officially and to be respectful of every, every religion here in Nevada.

Astra, Private Citizen:

Hi, this is Astra. I am calling to vote yes.

Muhammad Faraz Akber, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am from Islamic Information Center, Masjid Al-Noor, in Las Vegas. I am here to support this bill. Often community members reach out to us for a letter for [unintelligible] stating why they need to celebrate this holiday. They need to produce this letter at work or school.

I am really supporting this bill. I want to thank you, Assemblymember Nadeem and Assemblymember D'Silva and all who came to support this bill.

Chair Considine:

We will now move on to hear testimony in opposition. We will start in Carson City. Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 82? Seeing no one approach, Las Vegas, is there anyone in opposition to bill A.B. 82?

Rokai Yusufzai:

Madam Chair, this is Rokai Yusufzai. I see no one.

Chair Considine:

Is there anyone on the phone to testify in opposition of A.B. 82?

Aamna Chaudhry, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I would like to vote. I do not know how this works, but I would like to vote on the hearing on A.B. 82 to recognize the holidays Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Vaisakhi as official observance for the state of Nevada.

Chair Considine:

Thank you very much and was this testimony in support or opposition?

Aamna Chaudhry, Private Citizen:

Yes, I would like to support these holidays. No, I would like to support these days to be recognized.

Chair Considine:

We will move this testimony to support. We will now move to hear testimony in neutral. Do we have anyone here in Carson City who would like to testify in neutral on A.B. 82? Seeing no one, anyone in Las Vegas wishing to testify in neutral?

Rokai Yusufzai:

Madam Chair, Rokai Yousufzai. Cricket's over here.

Chair Considine:

Is there anyone on the line to testify in neutral in A.B. 82? [There was no one.] At this time, if the sponsor would like to make any brief remarks.

Assemblymember Nadeem:

I want to tell everyone that this bill, A.B. 82, it brings community together. Bringing communities together fosters connection, understanding, and support. It cultivates a sense of belonging, encourages collaboration, and inspires diversity. United community members can share resources, collaborate achievements, and tackle challenges collectively. It promotes empathy and strengthens relationships, creating a safer, more vibrant environment. Ultimately, community bonds enhance well-being, create lasting friendships, and empower

individuals to make a positive impact. The beauty lies in shared experiences, mutual respect, and the joy of coming together for a common purpose.

Assemblymember D'Silva:

Thank you for the hearing, Madam Chair. Thank you.

[[Exhibit C](#) and [Exhibit D](#) were submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Chair Considine:

Thank you very much and I will now close the hearing on [A.B. 82](#). I will also now open the hearing on [Assembly Bill 50](#), which revises provisions relating to victims of a mass casualty incident. To present this measure we have Ashley Garza Kennedy, Principal Management Analyst, Government Affairs, Clark County. Please go ahead when you are ready.

**[Assembly Bill 50](#): Revises provisions relating to victims of a mass casualty incident.
(BDR 20-466)**

**Ashley Garza Kennedy, Principal Management Analyst, Government Affairs,
Department of Administrative Services, Clark County:**

Joining me today is Clark County's fire chief, Billy Samuels, and Misty Richardson from our Office of Emergency Management. We appreciate the opportunity this morning to talk to you about [Assembly Bill 50](#). Before we go through the bill itself, we want to outline why we got here. In August 2018, nearly a year after the 1 October tragedy that took the lives of 58 people and injured 850 more at the Route 91 Harvest Festival, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Clark County Fire Department, and Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department conducted an after-action report to outline what worked and where we can use some improvement. One of the pressing items that emerged from that report was victim information management, specifically knowing who was deceased, who was injured, who was missing, and which hospitals victims had been transported to.

With this critical issue in mind, Clark County's Office of Emergency Management collaborated with various public safety agencies to find an integrated unified system that could assist in the identification and reunification of victims during a mass casualty incident. However, we found that no existing system met our needs. After five years of working on it, Clark County, through a partnership between Emergency Management and IT [Information Technology], created our own system called the Impacted Persons Database. The purpose of [A.B. 50](#) is to modernize what is currently a manual and fragmented process by using technology to ensure all responders, whether on scene, at hospitals, in emergency centers, that were assisting families, are operating with the same real time information. During a large-scale emergency, multiple response efforts are happening simultaneously.

At this point, I am going to turn it over to Chief Samuels and Ms. Richardson. They are the true heroes who do this work and they will show their experiences and the real-world challenges that we aim to solve with this bill.

Billy Samuels, Fire Chief, Clark County Office of Emergency Management:

Good morning, Chair and Committee. I am Billy Samuels, Fire Chief of Clark County and also the Emergency Manager for Clark County, hopefully, for not too much longer. A quick experience. After the 1 October shooting, we did have the family assessment center that we stood up. It was an amazing opportunity to be a part of. I ran the operations section. During that part, we had to work on the reunification and the notifications to the families who were affected. I want you to put yourself on my end when people were calling us either from New York or Korea or even northern Nevada and asking where their loved ones were. It is horrible to say, I do not know. That is really unacceptable. After that event, we did buy an off-the-shelf product to help with that patient tracking—it failed. It was not able to meet our needs in our community.

Since then, me and my assistant risk manager were talking one day; Why not just build our own? We called up Clark County IT, in collaboration—this was not built in a silo. This was with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Missing Persons Detail, the Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner, Clark County IT, the Southern Nevada Health District, and all of our local hospitals. They all had input into making this database come to fruition.

I do not want this to happen again and for someone to call me and say, Where is my loved one? Please put yourself on that side and feel how horrible that is when they have no answers—most of the people were able to answer their phones—if they had them. But if you were at the Family Assistance Center of Southern Nevada, you would have seen 2,000 cell phones sitting out there. There is no cloak and dagger that the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) has to say who belongs to what? They have to turn them on and hope somebody calls them. We cannot do that again. We need to make sure we meet the needs of the community, the country, and our world so we can meet the needs of those people affected if and when this will happen again.

Misty Richardson, Assistant Emergency Manager, Clark County:

Thank you for the opportunity this morning to come before you and your consideration of A.B. 50. This bill is the culmination and work of extensive time and energy and collaboration, multijurisdictionally, across the public and private sector partners that we have. A little bit about my role with 1 October. I initially reported to the Multi-Agency Coordination Center, serving as the deputy manager. Within four hours I was transitioning to become a Family Assistance Center manager and was charged with standing up the Family Assistance Center of Southern Nevada. I was at the Convention Center at 8 a.m., and families started arriving. We were not yet open. We did not have services yet in place but were beginning to receive families who had found out that they had loved ones who may have been a victim and possibly deceased. I was there by myself with convention service staff trying to get things in place.

Amongst these 12 families that I initially had, one stands out in particular that had a little girl. She was elementary age, and she was covered in blood. Her family and her did not know where her mother was. She was at the event and they lost where her mom was in the chaos of

fleeing. She was at the Family Assistance Center for nearly 16 hours before we were able to confirm the whereabouts of her mother. The families who were waiting in there to be called in one by one, excruciatingly, waiting. It was unimaginable, the agony that they were going through as the helpers, the responders, the public safety officials were trying to sort out where all of these people were.

In our state and in our community, we have four medical systems. They all operate on different internal systems for their record keeping. They have their internal practices. It was a Sunday when this initially happened. There was a lot of misunderstandings of how the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) applied or did not apply. To err on the side of caution, people were very conservative with the information they were sharing, which was delaying the reunification of these families beyond any level of comprehension that you could imagine. The helpers who were there at that Family Assistance Center were paralyzed in being able to share information because there was no coordination of this. We were reduced to pen and paper at intake because we did not have a system in place, because the system simply did not exist for what we were encountering that day.

Post 1 October, the after-action was mentioned; this was a whole community after-action led by Federal Emergency Management Agency, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services through the fire department. But, Emergency Management also conducted a whole community after-action. In that after-action, one of the things that was notable was our outstanding best practice for standing up the Resiliency & Justice Center so quickly to be able to transition from that Family Assistance Center into the Resiliency & Justice Center. However, one of the things that was most outstanding was the fact that we were not capturing everyone who was impacted immediately, not only in the moment not able to track these families and reunify them quickly, but also missing people who were otherwise impacted that did not get captured. That was something that we knew had to be worked on.

Shortly after the incident, we had federal authorities come out from Washington, D.C. to speak to us and clear up any understandings about HIPAA and what was allowed and what was not. We found out that was actually not a barrier for information sharing. As was said previous, we spent a good five years looking for a software program that could assist with this. Everything that we found was proprietary and was not nimble enough to meet the needs that we knew existed. We started with the end in mind, the long-term recovery of these individuals and how they would be able to receive services. We began building the system about six months prior to the first Formula 1 [racing event]. We were able to align some of the National Football League's practices that they used with communicating for those that are ticketed at their events. We built this, and we were invited to come to the National Homeland Security Conference, where we were in a track that was stating that this was the best practice. Our multijurisdictional partners have been in alignment from the get-go in building this out.

This system, I think it is important for everyone to understand, is permission-based. The securities have been put in place so that we were able to encapsulate that front-end piece where victims are reunified through law enforcement in the coroner's office. Then should they choose to opt-in for long-term recovery services, they have up to two years during that

period of time to be entered into the system voluntarily so that they can receive those ongoing services through the Resiliency & Justice Center.

The system that we built is HIPAA and Health Level Seven International-compliant. It provides real-time information sharing for policy decisions to be made. Our foreign nationals who we also encountered during this incident, have the ability to provide that information in real time to the consulate so that they can begin providing those services. This is vitally important for the fact that we are an international tourist destination and we need to be able to provide those services immediately to those visitors so that we can get them reunited with those who can help best.

In closing, this has been seven years in the making. We have engaged with our partners from around the state and have been recognized by federal authorities and industry leaders as a first-of-its-kind system that will profoundly improve trauma-informed victim services. As a public safety community, we would appreciate your support in A.B. 50, and thank you again for your consideration of this bill.

Ashley Garza Kennedy:

To share a story that I just heard about just recently in preparation for this bill, I think Ms. Richardson and Mr. Samuels outlined what it looked like on their end, but also from our coroner's office, where you had families lining up wanting to know if their family was there. Then from a hospital administrator I spoke to recently, this is very much a manual process. She pulled a report of all their Jane Doe's and John Doe's that day. Families, they did not know what to do with them. They put everybody in the cafeteria as they tried to gather who was there. They had literal pictures of family members that they were taking to each patient's room to try to identify who they were. One victim in particular who had injuries to her face was only able to be identified because of a picture of a tattoo that she had. She was reunited with her family and ultimately she did survive the incident. It was a manual process, and this database that this team has worked tirelessly on is about using technology to make this more seamless.

Now I will walk through the bill. We do have a conceptual amendment [[Exhibit E](#)] that we filed with the Committee. I am going to walk through both of them together. Starting with section one of the bill and of our proposed amendment, it includes several key provisions that include how the database should be established and maintained. First, counties may create the electronic database to track victims during a mass casualty incident. Additionally, the conceptual amendment includes various security measures, as Ms. Richardson already outlined. We have redefined what follow-up services mean. To make the distinction very clear, the database is used for the purposes of reunification and identification. However, victims are also eligible for various other assistance. On the front end, we are identifying victims. After victims have been identified and reunited with their families, they have the ability to opt into our system so they can continue to receive the victim services provided by the Resiliency & Justice Center.

We have redefined what those long-term support services mean to include anything like financial aid, or medical and psychological support. This would be an opt-in process. Additionally, the system must comply with HIPAA and other privacy laws. The information collected in the database must be deleted after all victims have been identified and reunified unless a victim authorizes, again, to receive the long-term support services and has opted in. Counties and their employees are immune from civil liability unless misconduct, gross negligence, or bad faith is proven. Lastly, we have revised the definition of a mass casualty incident to mean an event causing at least three casualties that overwhelms local emergency response resources and requires a surge response. This is in line with some other federal definitions as well.

Section 2 of the bill ensures the system is confidential and not subject to public record. Looking at section 3 of the bill and our proposed amendment, we have been in many conversations with our local hospital partners and have taken a lot of their suggestions. If a hospital or emergency medical center receives a victim of a mass casualty incident, they must report the patient in the database as soon as possible but not to exceed 24 hours after the patient has arrived. The information to report includes minimally necessary information such as the victim's name and their date of birth, if known, and any identifying physical characteristics. Again, for people where we do not know who they are, somebody could be identified by a tattoo they may have.

Reporting must follow HIPAA regulations to ensure compliance with privacy laws. Then before discharge, a hospital shall request authorization of a victim to receive the long-term support services provided by the statewide victim assistance center. Hospitals and emergency medical centers and their employees are immune from any civil liability if they report the information in good faith and are also protected from liability in cases of any unauthorized breaches of the system that occur after any reports are submitted. Hospitals do not have to report victim information if the incident occurred in another jurisdiction and the local county is not managing reunification efforts. For example, if there is an incident that happens near, for example a state border—maybe Utah—if patients from Utah are transported to, let us just say a Las Vegas hospital, whichever jurisdiction is responsible for the database. We want to make sure that is clear.

Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the bill are conforming changes, and then sections 7 through 9 of the bill are proposed to be deleted with our conceptual amendment. This will remove any penalties to the hospital for not reporting into the system. We tried to go through this quick, but that concludes our presentation. We are happy to take your questions, and I just wanted to note members of the Resiliency & Justice Center who are sitting here with us today. They are our statewide center for assistance to victims and are here to answer some other technical questions, too.

Chair Considine:

Thank you for standing up this database and for all the work that you all do. We do have some questions.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair—appreciate the presentation. It sounds like you actually had a very good after-action report and follow-through on developing a system, which sounds very comprehensive. With that, you were able to do that without a statute. I am trying to understand why the statute is needed. You did not actually say we need this statute because of some inability to do something. If you could elaborate on that, I would appreciate it.

Ashley Garza Kennedy:

The main objective of the bill is that the hospitals are required to report into the system. That is the missing piece.

Assemblymember Karris:

Thank you for creating such an amazing system that did not exist before. I just want to be clear that I understand this bill the way you are intending it. Hopefully we never have another mass casualty incident, but in the times we live in, we may. This database, you are going to gather as much data as you can, and the injured people, as you get them identified, will then be able to give consent if they want to be part of the database or not. Then the part I really want to make sure is that—say they leave the hospital or the clinic, wherever they were at, and usually at a time of such duress, you just want to put it behind you. But they have the opportunity to enter back into the database up to two years was it?

Ashley Garza Kennedy:

To answer the first half of your question, at the start of an incident, we are only collecting in the database minimally necessary information that is in compliance with federal HIPAA standards. We are able to collect patient information for the purposes of reunification and identification. Minimally necessary—your name, your date of birth if we know it, and any identifying physical characteristics. Now, once the incident is over and we have identified the victims and reunited folks with their families, at that point the information in the system would be deleted. What would stay in the system is if somebody had agreed to receive the long-term support services where they will be connected with case management services. That is going to be the opt in part.

What you said about the two years; for a victim of violence, usually to be eligible for the specific victims of crime, you have to make a report within two years of the incident. Right now we are talking about a mass casualty incident, that could be an act of violence; that happened on 1 October. It also could be a natural disaster, like a hurricane or a fire which this team has also worked with, and what happened in California recently. In that event—I kind of glossed over it in the amendment so I apologize—we will also put a piece in there that the hospitals will need to create some type of identifier in the patient's record that they were part of that incident. When you are a victim of crime you usually have a police report. For a mass casualty incident, it is very hard to prove that you were actually part of that incident. The hospitals, however want to do this in their systems, add an identifier in the event the patient did not consent to be part of the database moving forward, that they have an identifier that they can prove that yes, they were a victim of this mass casualty incident and are eligible to

receive different services. I hope that clears it up and I will turn it over to Ms. Richardson as well.

Misty Richardson:

I think that this is a piece that may not have been as clear. When we do have a mass casualty incident like that and patients are being brought in, it is actually within the system already that they have a check box, and it is part of their internal processes that already exist. This is not something that would be different for them from their standard operating procedures that are already in place.

Assemblymember Karris:

Thank you for clarifying all of that.

Assemblymember Flanagan:

I like the idea of the program. What I want to ask or point out or have you point out, this speaks to mass casualties for 1 October. We know that we have also had the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) shooting, and Clark County, in the largest jurisdiction, you respond to a lot of stuff: 1 October, UNLV, the avalanche on Mount Charleston, preparation for Formula 1, and the Super Bowl. This system allows you to track incidents separately long-term and then overlap your planning on not just responding to mass casualty situations, but maybe mass preparation and prevention, because we are such a tourist destination and such a high target for, let us just be honest, tourist attack. Can you speak to how its long-term use works and its separation of incidents, and then how people are grouped into that for tracking or response purposes?

Misty Richardson:

Thank you for that question, Assemblymember. What I can say is that this system was built, as I said, with the end in mind. We want to be the most trauma-informed community as far as dealing with those who have been impacted by incidents that are unfortunate. That could be a natural disaster, as you stated, or an incident of a man-made disaster, or a mass casualty incident. For the purposes of Assembly Bill 50, we are discussing the front end of the system, which is specifically for that reunification and that just-in-time dashboard so that we can have a really good representation of where all of our patients are. Also to be able to get the coroner's office and law enforcement to connect very quickly with those family members and to expedite that process. For the purposes of the bill, that is why we have that piece.

There is a veil of separation of information though. I think that it is important to understand that this database has much more capacity. It is the day in and day out case management system for the long-term recovery of those who are impacted by either natural disaster or through a mass casualty or a victimization of some sort. The Resiliency & Justice Center is the day-to-day user of that long-term recovery side so that they can assist those who have been impacted from those other incidents you mentioned. They may reach out through outreach efforts through the Resiliency & Justice Center or through law enforcement partners that have had interface with victims who may need more substantial services long-term beyond that most immediate acute time that law enforcement is providing their handouts,

their pamphlets; any number of ways people can come into contact with the Resiliency & Justice Center to receive those long-term community recovery services that are already in place.

What we have taken is all of these bifurcated systems that victim service providers are already doing and we have built a system that, once it becomes enculturated within the victim service community, they will be able to have a warm handoff from one case provider to the next. That initial law enforcement victim advocate then may transition over to the district attorney's office victim advocates, and they can clearly see the services that have been provided. Now this is all of the services that people are able to access because they have voluntarily reached out or they have been recommended for a victim advocate at some point.

Billy Samuels:

Can I follow up on that, please? I thought Misty was going to touch on this. You mentioned the UNLV shooting on December 6, a couple of years ago. We were able to reunify 542 people in less than six hours. I did stand up the Multi-Agency Coordination Center. By the time I got to the Convention Center, everyone was already gone and reunited. It was because of that database, the victims were able to put their names in, the loved ones could put that name in on who they were looking for, and it brought them together. Again, it is either a preplanned event like country concerts or Formula 1 or New Year's Eve or those incidents that occur that are spontaneous. It is multipurpose that we are able to reunify. It was amazing. People need timely information, but it has got to be accurate, and this database helped us with that.

Assemblymember Flanagan:

Thank you very much, Chief Samuels, and also thank you for adding in New Year's because I actually did mention that, and for what happens in southern Nevada region and the quarter of a million people who congregate and what we deal with or what is dealt with. Thank you for mentioning that and for the clarification on the overlap of how the system works across the different events and types of occurrences.

Chair Considine:

Any other questions from the Committee? Seeing none, thank you so much for your presentation. We will now move on to testimony. We will first hear testimony in support of A.B. 50 in Carson City. Go ahead when you are ready.

Christopher M. Ries, Police Detective, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department:

In the sake of brevity, we support this very important piece of legislation A.B. 50.

Misty Robinson, Public Health Preparedness Supervisor, Southern Nevada Health District:

Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) serves as an emergency responder under the Clark County Multi-Agency Coordination Center. In that role, SNHD is tasked with locating patients within health care facilities who are victims of a mass casualty incident to assist in the reunification process with family members. During the response to the 1 October

shooting, this process took weeks in some cases. Having a database where health care facilities can easily upload minimal necessary patient information will assist us in that effort and will aid patients and their families to begin the recovery process as soon as possible. We thank you for your time and hope that you move this bill forward.

Tennille K. Pereira, Esq., Director, Resiliency & Justice Center:

I have been working at the Resiliency & Justice Center, formerly named the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center, since 1 October happened. I have kind of seen this whole process evolve—had the opportunity to work with Clark County in the development and in particular, in the case management side of the system. We have developed the system to be trauma-informed. That is the most important piece from my perspective in working with the victims, families, and survivors of a number of mass incidents since 1 October. When you speak with the families of the 58 and you ask them about their story or they start to tell their story, what they start with is the hours after the shooting. They talk about the grueling hours of waiting, sitting in a room watching other family members come out, some family members collapsing in horror of the news they just received. You heard about the little girl sitting there in her mother's blood waiting to hear if they found her mom alive, her dad knowing that she was not going to be alive, and they sat there for hours—some of them, well beyond 24 hours waiting for that news. That is not trauma-informed.

While we cannot prevent every act of awful violence like this, we are in control of how we handle it after it happens. I am asking that you support this because this is a trauma-informed system. It allows us to connect with individuals for long-term services. Healing takes years. It is not linear; it is up and down. This allows us to capture that immediately for people who want help. I still hear on a weekly basis from individuals who have not reached out yet because they were never connected. There was no database to capture that. This also allows them to tell their story—once. We should not be asking survivors to tell their story. If they want to tell their story, we are here to listen, but they should not have to tell it over and over. This system allows for that. Please support it.

David Cherry, Government Affairs Manager, City of Henderson:

For those of us who witnessed the aftermath of the 1 October tragedy, we remember the frantic efforts to assist the victims and reunite those who were at the event site with their families, friends, and loved ones, many of whom are visiting southern Nevada from other communities, and also the efforts to continue offering them long-term support services. We thank Clark County for bringing A.B. 50 and support the bill and the proposed amendment before you. Assembly Bill 50 would provide an important mechanism for sharing information about victims of mass casualty and natural disaster events and will support vital response and recovery efforts including reunification, identification, and other follow-up services. Assembly Bill 50 also addresses concerns with HIPAA and the need for immunity. The bill's mechanism is urgently needed and would ensure our region is prepared for all future scenarios, whether man-made or natural disasters. We urge your support.

Tyler J. Winkler, Esq., Supervising Attorney, Resilience & Justice Center:

Every day I am proud to work with our multidisciplinary team to help folks impacted by trauma, overcome barriers to long-term recovery. This bill will do a lot of work to ensure that they get that support and clear up uncertainty from the chaos of a mass casualty incident. Thank you very much for considering this bill.

Taylor Allison, Director, Emergency Management and Government Affairs, Lyon County:

I would like to commend the bill's sponsors for bringing this forward and being industry leaders in this space. As an emergency manager in my career, unfortunately, I have had to respond to a number of mass casualty incidents where the use of this system would have been incredibly beneficial; including during the 2011 Reno Air Races crash. Emergency managers, such as myself, in rural counties rely on pen and paper methods or as we call it, the sharpie method, which causes significant delays and impacts to our families. I again thank the sponsors and encourage your support of A.B. 50.

Ryan Beaman, Vice President, Professional Fire Fighters of Nevada:

Just want to first say thank you to Clark County for using one of their bill drafts for this important piece of legislation, and the leadership of our fire chief of Clark County. Also, our previous Fire Chief who is now Senator John C. Steinbeck. We do travel throughout the country, and as firefighters, we are the leading industry in a lot of these innovative ideas. They are always reaching out to us and saying, Hey, how do you do this? It is the good leadership that we have from top of these fire departments throughout the state of Nevada that we come up with these ideas. We support the bill.

Lorea Arostegui, Mass Victimization Advocate, Office of Emergency Management and Resiliency Center, Clark County:

I work between the Office of Emergency Management and the Resiliency & Justice Center. I have responded to several incidents here and outside of the state and just wanted to say that this bill is very important, and I support it.

Chair Considine:

Is there any additional testimony in support in Carson City for A.B. 50? [There was none.] We will move to Las Vegas. Seeing no one in Las Vegas, we will move on to testimony in opposition. Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to A.B. 50? Please go ahead when you are ready.

Patrick D. Kelly, President and CEO, Nevada Hospital Association:

We have been working with Clark County for several months on this bill. It has been a great cooperative effort. They have recognized some of the issues we have raised; they appear to be addressed in the amendment. We just need a little more time to go through the amendment, but we are looking forward to working with them. At this point, technically, we stand in opposition. Thank you.

Chair Considine:

Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Is there anyone else that would like to testify in opposition? Anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas? [There was no one.] We will move to neutral. Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to testify in neutral? Seeing no one approach, and still seeing no one in Las Vegas, would the sponsors like to come and make any final remarks?

Ashley Garza Kennedy:

We did not mention this during our bill presentation, but we are hosting emergency management day today and do have a demo of the database available that you can see a video of. We are located on the second-floor atrium today with these fine folks and their emergency management colleagues. If you are interested in seeing what the database looks like, we can show that to you. We will continue working on the bill with the hospital, hospital partners, and hopefully we will get to a good place.

Chair Considine:

I will close the hearing on A.B. 50. We will move to the last item in our agenda which is public comment. [There was no one.]

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Our next meeting will be Friday, February 28, 2025, at 9 a.m. in Room 3143. That concludes our meeting for today. The meeting is adjourned [at 10:39 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Karri Hurwitz
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblymember Venicia Considine, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 82	C	Assemblymember Reuben D'Silva, Assembly District No. 28	Proposed conceptual amendment
A.B. 82	D	Arathi Veeraswamy, Private Citizen	Email in support
A.B. 50	E	Ashley Garza Kennedy, Principal Management Analyst, Government Affairs, Department of Administrative Services, Clark County	Proposed conceptual amendment