MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Eighty-Third Session
March 12, 2025

The Committee on Natural Resources was called to order by Chair Natha C. Anderson at 4:03 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, in Room 3143 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 2 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada and to 123 High Technology Center, Great Basin College, 1500 College Pkwy., Elko, 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 Natha C. Anderson, Chair
Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, Vice Chair
Assemblymember Venicia Considine
Assemblymember Rich DeLong
Assemblymember Bert K. Gurr
Assemblymember Alexis M. Hansen
Assemblymember Venise Karris
Assemblymember Heidi Kasama
Assemblymember Elaine M. Marzola
Assemblymember Howard Watts

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblymember Jovan A. Jackson (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Toby Yurek, Assembly District No. 19
Assemblymember Gregory S. Koenig, Assembly District No. 38

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst
Cindy Glass, Committee Manager
Karen Cook, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Larry Johnson, President, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife
Warren B. Hardy II, representing Moapa Valley Water District
Paul Young, Commissioner, Board of Wildlife Commissioners, Department of Wildlife
Brad Bauman, Wildlife Staff Specialist, Department of Wildlife
Kris Coston, Board of Directors, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife; and Chairman, Muley Fanatic Foundation, Sierra Front Nevada Chapter
Ashton Caselli, Director, Safari Club International, Northern Nevada Chapter
Bryce Pollock, Policy Co-Chairman, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Nevada Chapter
Jay Dixon, representing BTAZ Nevada LLC; and Flying M Ranch
Trystin St. Denis, Policy and Advocacy Associate, Nevada Conservation League
Mike Ryan, Director, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited
Shayda Sanjideh, Meat and Poultry Inspection Project Manager, State Department of Agriculture
J.J. Goicoechea, Director, State Department of Agriculture
Kelli Kelly, Private Citizen, Fallon, Nevada
Staci Emm, Director, Meat Workforce Development Program, University of Nevada, Reno
Doug Busselman, Executive Vice President, Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Shane Piccinini, Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Caleb Cage, representing Nevada Cattlemen's Association

Chair Anderson:
[Roll was called. Committee protocol was explained.] We have two bill hearings on the agenda today. We have two bill draft requests (BDR) that the Committee will be sponsoring. Committees are asked to introduce committee BDRs to begin the bill process, assign a bill number, and possibly get referred back to our Committee. Your vote to introduce the committee BDR is not an indication of your support.

BDR R-388—Declares support of the Legislature for certain principles of solar energy development in the State. (Later introduced as Assembly Joint Resolution 12.)

Do I have a motion to introduce BDR R-388?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER LA RUE HATCH MOVED TO INTRODUCE BILL DRAFT REQUEST R-388.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER KARRIS SECONDED THE MOTION

Is there any discussion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACKSON WAS ABSENT FOR THE VOTE.)

A second BDR has been delivered to us, BDR 10-679.

BDR 10-679—Revises provisions relating to natural resources. (Later introduced as Assembly Bill 429.)

Do I have a motion to introduce BDR 10-679?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER WATTS MOVED TO INTRODUCE BILL DRAFT REQUEST 10-679.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CONSIDINE SECONDED THE MOTION

Is there any discussion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACKSON WAS ABSENT FOR THE VOTE.)

Our first bill hearing will be Assembly Bill 132.

Thank you to our bill presenters, Assemblymember Yurek and Mr. Johnson. You may begin when you are ready.

Assembly Bill 132: Revises provisions relating to water. (BDR 48-586)

Assemblymember Toby Yurek, Assembly District No. 19:
Some of you may remember I had the privilege of serving on this Committee last session. I have to say I actually miss this group; I miss the policy discussions. I appreciate the opportunity to be back before you today. Before I go any further I want to make something very clear. I would never say that the bill I am about to present to you is simple. I care about this bill and I want it to survive. But I do believe this is a very straightforward bill, and my goal and my aim is to make this presentation equally straightforward.

This legislation came to me at the request of the Nevada Coalition of Wildlife [Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife] in response to ongoing drought conditions that are impacting our state's wildlife. As our water challenges persist, we need practical, science-based solutions that support Nevada's ecosystems in a responsible and cost-effective way. Assembly Bill 132 proposes a slight revision to *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 533.027, which was enacted in 2017. This statute exempts the de minimis collection of precipitation from water appropriation laws in two circumstances. One of those circumstances, which A.B. 132 is amending, is water collected in guzzlers.

I remember in my first session not quite understanding what a guzzler was. Let me be clear: guzzlers catch and store water from rain or snow and can use pipes to direct that water to storage tanks and drinking troughs. They are generally located in remote areas, and they provide an important water source for wildlife during times of drought.

To be exempt from the water appropriation laws, the collection must not conflict with any existing water rights and the guzzler must meet certain requirements. Currently, the maximum guzzler capacity allowed by statute is 20,000 gallons and a pipe length of a 1/4 mile or less. Additionally, the guzzler must be developed by certain state or federal entities and approved for use by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. In short, we would like to increase guzzler capacity and pipe length. To help explain the importance of these changes and the benefits they can bring to Nevada's wildlife, I am now going to turn it over to my friend, Larry Johnson, the president of the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife.

Larry Johnson, President, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife:
Our mission is to protect and enhance our wildlife resources and perpetuate our sporting traditions. We have been active since 1991, although I believe I have testified on every wildlife bill in front of this body since a few years before that. Guzzlers are artificial, manmade water developments for the benefit of wildlife. Why are those necessary? They are necessary because during the settlement of the west, man has monopolized water sources and wildlife has suffered. Oftentimes, wildlife has been pushed back into less suitable habitat that exhibits few natural water resources. Guzzlers have been constructed as artificial sources of water that provide year-round water to all forms of wildlife. We are obviously hunters, but at the same time you need to understand that guzzlers benefit everything from insects, to rodents, to birds, to predators, to big game, to you name it; everything. Everything uses our guzzler projects. I think there are over a couple thousand guzzlers in the state, probably over 1,000 big game guzzlers. The remainder of them are smaller units for small game and small mammals.

Guzzlers—as Assemblymember Yurek explained—collect natural precipitation, whether that be rainfall or snow melt, whatever. They collect natural precipitation, and they funnel it into underground storage tanks. The most common guzzlers are actually a large metal apron that is sloped to drain to a gutter system with downspouts into storage tanks that are located beneath the storage apron. The water is then metered out to a drinker, typically 101-150 feet away from the collection apron. The design of these has evolved over the years to where we now have almost no moving parts—very low maintenance there—and expanded in size.

Years ago, many of our guzzlers were built without the knowledge of the extreme number of animals that were going to be supported with this water resource. For that reason, in drought years wildlife is able to drink some of our earlier guzzler projects dry. Up until recently, there had been zero precipitation in southern Nevada for 88 solid months. Guzzlers were on the verge of being depleted. At that point, the need for this bill becomes evident. This bill is more important to southern Nevada than it is to the north. Up north in our drought years, we typically get more water than southern Nevada gets in good years. This is really focused on the need for southern Nevada.

We are at a point if we do not have continued precipitation in the south—we have had some relief from recent storms, the first precipitation in many, many, many, months—the Department of Wildlife is planning to airlift water by helicopters and dump on these aprons to refill these storage tanks at great cost. When I say at great cost, I am talking about helicopter costs of $1,000 to $2,000 an hour. We can run up a bill of hundreds of thousands of dollars overnight. At that point, Department of Wildlife comes looking to non-governmental organizations to help them in that endeavor. We have done so in the past; we will do so in the future. At the same time, we need to be planning ahead and try to make things better. That is really the purpose of this bill.

The only other thing I want to add is, I mentioned the most common type of guzzler is the sheet metal apron slope to drain. The other type that is built in southern Nevada sometimes is a slick rock where a single layer of limestone collects the precipitation at the bottom. Little check dams and so forth are built to funnel that water into a pipe, the downstream tanks, and drinkers, thus the need to expand the present 1/4 mile maximum length of that pipeline to 1/2 mile. We need to look at every available site differently. There are some times where we may need to run a pipeline longer to get into the storage tanks and drinkers. I am sorry if I was too technical or drawn out, but that is the summary of it.

Chair Anderson:
Your passion comes through beautifully. Would you like to continue, Assemblymember?

Assemblymember Yurek:
This is where I would plan to go through a section-by-section review of this very complex bill, but since there is only one section, I will draw you to two subsections. The first is section 1, subsection 1, paragraph (b), subparagraph (2), sub-subparagraph (I). It merely crosses out 20,000 and replaces it with 40,000. In section 1, subsection 1, paragraph (b), subparagraph (2), sub-subparagraph (III), it increases the pipeline from a 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile. I will say, as Mr. Johnson indicated, that these targeted, meaningful updates are going to allow these small self-sustaining water collection systems to provide a more reliable water source for our state's wildlife. We are free to take any questions the Committee may have.

Assemblymember DeLong:
I do have one technical question. The 40,000 gallons, is that U.S. or imperial gallons?

Larry Johnson:
Those are U.S. gallons. These are all-American guzzlers.

Assemblymember Kasama:
I want to get the 30,000-foot level since this is not my wheelhouse. Are these collection tanks that might be in rural areas, urban areas, it is not drawing on any other water source, it is just from rainfall or snow; just big containers collecting it, and then you are going to disperse it out for these needs for the wildlife?

Larry Johnson:
Entirely precipitation, whether it be rain or snow. These guzzlers are located remote, often extremely remote, sometimes—in southern Nevada—only reachable by helicopter. In northern Nevada, we try to locate guzzlers at the end of Jeep trails, cherry stem roads, et cetera, so that in the unlucky advent that they do need to be replenished, we can get a tanker truck and run a hose to refill them, sparing us the cost of a helicopter lift.

Assemblymember Hansen:
Now that we have clarified it is U.S. gallons, could you clarify—are they union-made, made in America guzzlers? We are just having fun with you guys.

Larry Johnson:
You have stumped me. I cannot guarantee in the past these have been made with U.S. steel.

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:
Hopefully, we are not impacting the water in the area. You said that it is a very small amount. What are protections around the guzzlers to make sure—I am coming from a ranch background—that cows and horses are not just coming and draining it the second that it gets filled?

Larry Johnson:
One of the design features of guzzlers is that we very carefully protect the drinkers with heavy pipe rail fencing that wildlife can go over, under, or through, but both range cattle and feral horses are excluded from. We do that specifically because the water demands of those large animals are so great. They would drink our projects dry in no time. We need to preserve our precious water for wildlife, which has much less water usage.

Assemblymember Yurek:
I really appreciate that question because as soon as I got this bill, I thought, what is going to be the problem here that I do not know about? I actually had somebody reach out and express some concern about the potential of us bringing additional water resources and how it could exacerbate the problem that we are having, for example, with feral horses. Could that then undermine the very intent and purpose of what we are trying to do to help our wildlife? I immediately reached out, started asking questions, and I did get assurances from those like Mr. Johnson, who are involved in developing these. They are all very well engineered to ensure that problem is not a problem.

Chair Anderson:
We will get started on testimony is support of A.B. 132, starting here in Carson City.

Warren B. Hardy II, representing Moapa Valley Water District:
We are here in support of this legislation. These guzzlers are exceptionally important, especially in southern Nevada where we have extended droughts. Moapa Valley Water District has programs where we work with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to donate water in drought conditions, and so we are very much in favor of this. I will speak to

Assemblymember Hansen's question. In my younger days I used to volunteer to help build these, so at least some of them were built non-union, but I am all-American, Madam Chair.

Paul Young, Commissioner, Board of Wildlife Commissioners, Department of Wildlife:
We are today in support of A.B. 132 and thank Assemblymember Yurek and the coalition for bringing this bill. Timing is of the essence. As Mr. Johnson alluded to, we are having serious issues with drought in Clark County, and Lincoln and Nye Counties. We are currently running out of water in several guzzlers down there. The expansion is going to help us today and going forward in the future.

Brad Bauman, Wildlife Staff Specialist, Department of Wildlife:
I am the water development program lead. The Nevada Department of Wildlife is in support of A.B. 132, increasing the capacity of water developments from 20,000 gallons to 40,000 gallons and the pipe length from 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile. Some of this is going to be a little repetitive from what Mr. Johnson said, but I will add in some details here. The Nevada Department of Wildlife builds and maintains water developments throughout Nevada where natural water sources have been compromised and where natural water is limited. The water development program also helps restore and protect natural springs. In some cases, these water developments are essential for sustaining wildlife populations of all sorts.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has 1,788 of these water developments throughout the state, and 1,301 of them are small water developments where the capacity is under 1,000 gallons. We have 487 of them for larger capacity, in which A.B. 132 is applicable to. The typical water development size for these larger designs right now is about 10,000 to 12,000 gallons, and we plan to stick with that except in certain circumstances. The largest of these water developments—we have three of them, and right now those have a capacity of almost 20,000 gallons. We are right below that 20,000 gallon mark. Currently, like you have heard, with prolonged drought in southern Nevada, we have done water hauls using helicopters to bucket water into guzzlers. We have done that to approximately 25 guzzlers to date, and this is very costly. It costs about $15,000 a day, and in the next couple of months we are going to spend several hundred thousand dollars bucketing water to these water developments. With that being said, NDOW is in support of A.B. 132. If there are any questions I would be happy to answer them.

Chair Anderson:
Because you are from the Department, I will be opening it up to the Committee to see if there are any questions. [There were none.] If you have that written down and could submit that in writing— because those numbers are so very specific—it would be greatly appreciated.

Kris Coston, Board of Directors, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife; and Chairman, Muley Fanatic Foundation, Sierra Front Nevada Chapter:
I am here today in support of A.B. 132. By increasing the capacity of our existing guzzlers, you will be providing much-needed support for critical species and for all of Nevada's wildlife during these uncertain environmental times of extended drought. I would like to thank you for all the hard work that you do on behalf of Nevada's wildlife.

Ashton Caselli, Director, Safari Club International, Northern Nevada Chapter:
We are here to show our support for A.B. 132 as well.

Bryce Pollock, Policy Co-Chairman, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Nevada Chapter:
We strongly support A.B. 132. I had a really nice two-minute comment put together, but because Mr. Johnson does such a thorough job of covering it, the only thing I wanted to point out—on the southern Nevada dry spell that we had in the last year, it was 214 days of no measurable precipitation. Not a one-off situation, this is not a solution for a rare problem. The previous length before that—that was a long one—was 240 days in 2020. It is something that we expect to continue in our dry state. This bill plans and prepares our wildlife for the dry climate we experience in the state we know and love.

Jay Dixon, representing BTAZ Nevada LLC; and Flying M Ranch:
I am here today testifying in support of this bill on behalf of two large-scale agricultural producers. Between the two of these agricultural producers, they graze several millions of acres of public land. We have water rights for this livestock, and I may have been the one who expressed concern about the feral horses to Assemblymember Yurek. We went through this, I did my homework, and we feel confident supporting this bill. We feel confident that this will not do anything to expand the range of feral horses. That was our concern. We fully support this bill.

Trystin St. Denis, Policy and Advocacy Associate, Nevada Conservation League:
Ditto.

Mike Ryan, Director, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited:
I am an active participant in the guzzler building crew. We are very much in support of this bill. One thing I would like to add that has possibly not been said is, there could be—because of different designs—some cost savings to make the dollars that are in use go a little bit farther because of tank size and some other issues.

Chair Anderson:
Is there anyone else here in Carson City? [There was no one.] Is there anybody in Las Vegas who would like to testify in support? [There was no one.] Elko? [There was no one.] How about on the phone? [There was no one.] We will now move to opposition testimony. Is there anyone here in Carson City who would like to offer testimony in opposition to this bill? [There was no one.] Las Vegas or Elko? [There was no one.] On the phone? [There was no one.] Let us move on to neutral. Is there anyone here in Carson City who would like to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] In Las Vegas or Elko? [There was no one.] On the phone? [There was no one.] That concludes testimony on this bill. Would you like to come up to make any closing remarks?

Assemblymember Yurek:
I needed to legitimize the question from my colleague from District No. 32 and tell you I was able to look into the issue of unionization on these projects. I was able to confirm that no union members were utilized in this because everybody is a volunteer.

Larry Johnson:
One thing I wanted to clarify in this entire program. The Nevada Department of Wildlife has two full-time guzzler crews, one in the south, one in the north. The Nevada Department of Wildlife locates with their biologists. They permit through the land management agencies and supervise construction. Sportsman volunteers provide the labor for construction. The Department of Wildlife tracks and uses the volunteer man-hours and vehicle mileage as state matching funds that is put against a triple matching fund of federal Pittman-Robinson Act [Pittman-Robinson Wildlife Restoration Act], which is also sportsman dollars collected from firearms and ammunition. They use it as a state match that completely funds all of the NDOW salaries, all of their equipment—backhoes, trucks, transports water trucks, everything—and pays for all of the materials through these water developments. No other state in the Union has the level of sportsmen involvement that Nevada does, and we are awfully proud of it.

Chair Anderson:
I will close the hearing on A.B. 132. I will open the hearing on Assembly Bill 251.

Assembly Bill 251: Revises provisions relating to the inspection of meat and poultry. (BDR 51-154)

Assemblymember Gregory S. Koenig, Assembly District No. 38:
With me today I have Director J.J. Goicoechea and Shayda Sanjideh. Both of their last names I am not going to attempt to spell, so they can do that when it is their turn to talk. I just got out of a hearing in Health and Human Services and the microphones went out halfway through. Nothing like losing your momentum right in the middle of it.

Typically, when I am looking at what bills I want to carry, I am looking for things that I think can help the rurals because I truly believe that Assemblymember Gurr and I really have the rural of the rurals. Assemblymember Hansen also.

This bill was brought forward to me by a constituent of mine, Kelli Kelly. Out of all the bills I have, this one has taken the most work. I would like to thank some other people who have worked on it who are not up here with me but have played a big part in having this come forward. That would be Kelli Kelly, Stacy Emm, and Michael Flores. We have all had a part in bringing this forward. I have been told to smile, and I told them that I am happy on the inside, but I have been told to smile a little bit more when I am doing this. I will work on that. What this bill does—it has to do with mobile meat processing units which will bring access to my rurals, especially the ultra rurals. It will bring access to fresh food for them. I think what we would like to do is turn to Ms. Sanjideh and have her give some reasons on

how this will help, some anecdotal stories, and then we will turn it over to Mr. Goicoechea to go over the bill.

Shayda Sanjideh, Meat and Poultry Inspection Project Manager, State Department of Agriculture:
I have been working on this program for the last few years to increase the access for everyone across Nevada; for local meats and for processors to have options for their processing instate. We do have a limited number of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected facilities in the state of Nevada. We are up to four fixed facilities, and so the need for options is clear. I can see mobile processing becoming a state-inspected process as a benefit if it is done appropriately and consciously.

J.J. Goicoechea, Director, State Department of Agriculture:
It is straightforward. You guys can read it. Ms. Sanjideh did not give herself enough credit. Just this morning we received an email that our meat and poultry inspection program—she has successfully answered all of the questions, jumped through all the hoops, and over all the hurdles of USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. They are now drafting our cooperative agreement so our state inspection program will come to fruition very, very soon. She and two additional staff members are in the process of completing training, if they have not already completed the majority of it, so we can at least have some inspectors to get started in this program as we go forward.

What this will do is remove "mobile processing unit" from definition in statute. It will make it an official establishment. By that they can be custom exempt, meaning they can go out, they can harvest animals, and process those animals for their own consumption or that of nonpaying guests. In addition, because we will now have our meat and poultry inspection program, if we send an inspector with those to do an antemortem and postmortem inspection—meaning before and after harvest of those carcasses—those would also qualify for our state-labeled meat and poultry inspection program. That is what this would do, and that is what we are here to try to get through today so we can, in fact, increase that capacity for rural Nevada and for everyone in the state. Everyone wants to know where their products come from, where their meat and poultry comes from. What better way than to go right to the source.

Chair Anderson:
Before we go to questions, I have a question for you. I noticed there is an amendment [Exhibit C] on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS). If you could walk through just a little bit of that, in particular on section 3, subsection 2(c), and why that was necessary to be amended.

Assemblymember Koenig:
We will pull that up momentarily.

Chair Anderson:
I want to make sure I am understanding exactly what the difference is.

Shayda Sanjideh:
The amendment that was proposed cuts out the language—the current definition—for a custom processing establishment. In the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), at this moment, "custom processing establishment" means a fixed facility. By having the language stay—meaning that a custom processing establishment is a fixed facility—this would effectively remove the option for a custom processor to have that line of business for themselves, and they would no longer be able to work as a custom processor. The current amendment at the time removes the language and custom for it to only mean a fixed facility to mean a broader range of processing capacities.

Chair Anderson:
Thank you for that clarification.

Assemblymember Kasama:
I see there is a fiscal note for the inspectors but right now, are we paying outside inspectors to come in? I am thinking there is a cost we are already incurring. Will this ultimately save us?

Chair Anderson:
Before we have the answers, just a reminder, this is not the fiscal committee. I think it is germane to the discussion; however, it is not the fiscal committee. But if you could answer that, it might help us.

J.J. Goicoechea:
Yes, there is a fiscal note on there. The majority of that is due to the fact this will be mobile, and we are not a hundred percent sure how far out they may or may not go into the rurals. I am working with the bill sponsor and others, and we will be attempting to adjust that downward, definitely not upward. I need to be clear. There is also another budget item floating around out there where USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are talking about merging a program together. Should that come to fruition and we do end up with those additional inspectors, there will not be the need to hire additional inspectors. We will have capacity in-house to do this.

Assemblymember Koenig:
Eventually this program—and especially the position—will not only be doing the mobile inspection. We need to hire a full-time position, and that is not full-time work at this point. They will be doing other work. It is fee-based, and eventually the hope and the goal is to have the fees support this position. The problem is, you cannot start Day One and pay for fees because it has not existed yet and you have not collected the fees. Within the first year—especially the numbers for the second year—hopefully we can get it taken away. Then if this other thing happens that Mr. Goicoechea is talking about where they combine the HHS with this, then that will be adjusted also.

J.J. Goicoechea:
I did not completely answer the Assemblymember's question. What we are doing now for inspectors was part of the question. As Ms. Sanjideh mentioned, we have four USDA-inspected plants in the state of Nevada. We do not currently have any inspectors because we are waiting for this agreement. We do have staff that we are training—thanks to Ms. Sanjideh—to do that, so we have in-house. But those are a very limited number. We are talking three of those. We will be stretched in order to reach our brick-and-mortar facilities once this comes on board. We are not currently inspecting any of them because we do not have that agreement in place yet.

Assemblymember Karris:
I got a bit of a lesson earlier today from Kelli Kelly, which was greatly appreciated because I did not understand a great many things that go into this bill. First, I would like to say congratulations on being able to get the state system going. Could you please go a little in depth on the need you have for the state to be doing this, how it differs from the USDA, and what the mobile will do to help all the people in the state?

J.J. Goicoechea:
The need came to light during the pandemic especially. Where is our food coming from? There was a shortage of a lot of protein, and we continue to struggle with a shortage of protein in the state of Nevada. Even the little round white ones, Assemblymember Watts. We have worked on that one. Now we are trying to work on some of the actual meat proteins. How it differs from the USDA: it must be at least as stringent, if not more stringent, than the USDA regulations in order to go forward. Food safety, a hundred percent on. It will actually be more stringent than those that are being USDA-inspected. There is no risk for that. The mobile portion of this—a lot of remote ranches, a lot of remote communities, they do not have a brick-and-mortar processing facility in them. This will create an avenue for those ranchers to be able to process those animals and get them to the retail market. I should mention that as part of this, you will see Nevada-stamped products in your grocery stores and in your restaurants.

Assemblymember DeLong:
I think this is a great idea. I just want one point of clarification because there was a mention of a fee. I want to make sure—it does not look like it is in the bill—this is not a two-thirds bill. Is it?

J.J. Goicoechea:
We actually have created regulations in *Nevada Administrative Code* Chapter 583. We went through that process literally over the last two years. I say we, meaning the gal at the right over here did that heavy lift. That is where those fees are. There are no fees here. While there is a fiscal note on there, as I mentioned, we are working to try to find a way to make sure we have an inspector needed to follow this trailer.

Assemblymember DeLong:
But, it is not a two-thirds bill?

[J.J. Goicoechea responded by winking.]

Assemblymember Koenig:
I do not see that on this paper right here.

Chair Anderson:
It has not been deemed to be one at this time.

Assemblymember Hansen:
I do appreciate this bill. I think its time has come, and I appreciate the hard work that has been laid over the last several years to make this all happen, I think 2019, with some of the poultry stuff. I want to give a little antidote that I came across. We were recently in Ely and there is a lovely steakhouse in, I think, the Ramada Inn. A little shout out to a Nevada rancher that owns it, operates it, supplies the meat. I was wondering where do they go? They must have to go pretty far for the inspection of their meat. Maybe that could be Salt Lake, I think that is probably the closest for them. I can see this mobility would really serve well in a lot of our rural districts and save that cost, that time.

With this whole push, I think of us being a lot more conscientious about where our food is coming from; to know that it is right here, we are familiar with it, and we can take pride in it. I think it has got so many benefits. How long would we be looking at before the mobile units would really be able to be out?

Assemblymember Koenig:
There is one in Yerington, Nevada, right now that cannot go anywhere. Once this passes, there is that one all ready to go. I think there is another one somewhere else, but I am not sure where.

J.J. Goicoechea:
Assemblymember Koenig is correct. There is one there, and it is in Yerington if it is for USDA-inspected. These trailers can already do custom exempt. They can go out and process on a farm if they wish to. This is for the stamped product. As soon as we have our cooperative agreement—and I promise you, the minute she puts it on my desk, it will be signed—then we will be going. We are now just waiting for Federal Funds Information for States to get that. Once we get that, we will be able to start immediately on that. You touched on Ely, so while we are talking about mobile here, I do not want to lose sight that we also have brick-and-mortar facilities in rural Nevada. Those apply here as well; our regulations cover those. They will not have to go to Tooele [Utah], in that instance, to have those processed, or to Twin Falls [Idaho]. There are some there in White Pine County they could use if they did not use the mobile facility.

Assemblymember Watts:
I want to follow up on a couple of questions from my colleagues, to make sure—at least for all the members and others who are not as familiar with this—they understand the impacts that this can have. I too am very supportive of this, really excited about it. Going back to the

custom and the state stamp, my understanding is that, essentially, for those kind of custom uses—I think you talked about it—it really has to kind of not go anywhere, for personal use or maybe for a small kind of private event, something like that. Then the state stamp would be—essentially, we are moving into this new level. My understanding is that unlike a USDA stamp, we would not be able to move those products out of the state, but we would now be able to have local producers provide products that could then go to retail or go to establishments within the state of Nevada. Is that correct?

J.J. Goicoechea:
Yes, that is correct. We have already been approached by one individual who has a contract with restaurants in southern and northern Nevada to provide ground beef, and he is waiting for this because he wants it to be Nevada-stamped that he puts into those. It cannot cross state lines at this time. However, there is always talk. Sometimes Congress gets some work done, sometimes they do not. There have been bills in the past where there is actually a proposal to allow a limited amount of that product across state lines. We will be prepared for that should that ever come.

Assemblymember Watts:
I think that is really helpful information and is a really exciting development, especially for folks who take pride in having locally sourced products. I hope Congress can get some things done; that is another story. The one other thing I want to ask about—I think you mentioned there are four USDA facilities in the state. Can you just tell us where those are so we can have an understanding of some of the geographical needs that communities in our state face for getting their products processed?

Shayda Sanjideh:
These four fixed facilities that are USDA-inspected are sprinkled around northern Nevada. We have one facility in the Reno area, we have two facilities in the Fallon area, and the newest facility is down in the Gardnerville/Minden area.

Assemblymember Watts:
That is northwestern Nevada, so for all of eastern Nevada all the way down to southern Nevada, that is a long way to go to get meat processed. When you look at all that together, the opportunity for producers to have other options across the state—and then be able to get those products to retail or to restaurants throughout the state—would be a really significant improvement for folks.

J.J. Goicoechea:
You are exactly correct, but I think the one thing we do not want to lose sight of as well—if they are getting those inspected somewhere else, those are Nevada citizens and businesses that are losing that money. If they can stay in this state, why would you drive out of state to get the same thing done? That is what we are opening the door for as well.

Assemblymember Koenig:
I know two of those facilities are in Fallon, my hometown. Talking to the owners of those, they are more than excited to have the potential of that being under the state instead of under the feds. The one story I was told is, they were in the process of processing an animal. The federal inspector got a phone call, stepped out, and was on the phone for a while, and they had to completely stop everything and could not do anything until the guy came back in. They are not all the way excited with having to work with the feds.

Chair Anderson:
Are there plans to try to get some of the brick-and-mortar areas in the Elko area, in the Vegas area, in the other areas, because it is very heavy one spot?

J.J. Goicoechea:
Yes. There are already brick-and-mortar facilities in those areas, but they are doing custom-exempt. You bring it in, you take it home, you feed it to your family and nonpaying guests. Those we would go in and do an inspection to make sure that facility met our standards, and then we could have an inspector be available to those facilities if they want to go this route. They will be able to go both, so it is not one or the other. There are going to be times they are doing the custom-exempt. They may do that for Mr. DeLong, and then Mr. Koenig may come along and, Hey, I need to kill five this week to put in the grocery store. Then, we would inspect those.

Chair Anderson:
We will move on to testimony. We will start off with testimony in support, here in Carson City.

Kelli Kelly, Private Citizen, Fallon, Nevada:
It is probably abundantly clear to all of you that I am in support of this bill. That is going to be all I say, but I appreciate all of your very well-thought-out questions and the quality of the presentation.

Staci Emm, Director, Meat Workforce Development Program, University of Nevada, Reno:
I am an extension professor with the University of Nevada, Reno, Extension. I manage and direct the Meat Workforce Development Program for the University, which includes a mobile unit. In 2020, we were contracted by the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) during COVID-19 in a food access, food insecurity project to build a prototype that was economically feasible for entrepreneurship. We now have that prototype. We picked it up in April of 2021. We did custom harvest first while we waited for USDA inspection. It took us from 2022 to 2024 to become USDA-inspected. That was the timeline, that is how important it is to be able to work with these practices and these laws within the state with NDA.

You can say that I am totally in support of this bill, and so is our project team. Continually, since the start of this project, we are also trying to train a workforce. Our mobile unit—while we do a lot of custom in our USDA-inspected site—is in Yerington, Nevada. We are starting

to expand that across the state and into the rurals. Part of this project was to provide food access and food insecurity issues within the rurals. At that time, I was an extension educator in Mineral County. We all know that it has one grocery store, and if U.S. Route 95 is cut off, they are without food in three days.

I think the other important thing is, our team is also working with entrepreneurs who want to open new plants, specifically in Elko County and in Lincoln County. We did assist with the Douglas County plant. I am so thankful for Assemblymember Koenig and this Committee for being positive about this change. We did not realize that in NRS, mobile units could not be an official establishment until NDA worked on their administrative code.

Doug Busselman, Executive Vice President, Nevada Farm Bureau Federation:
We first started working on the whole area of bringing Nevada meat production into operations during COVID-19, and we saw where the market channels were totally blown out. We were in a pickle, and so our members adopted policy that, first of all, said that we wanted to establish a Nevada meat program in order that we could also have some of the things other states in the west have. We worked for a number of years with NDA. We worked with Ms. Sanjideh on the regulation process. All of those things have moved us to where we are today.

Again, under state law, mobile units are not permitted to be official establishments. That is really the main purpose for this bill—to bring about that ability for those mobile units to be authorized to be an official establishment to operate within the framework of the Nevada Meat Inspection Program. We are very supportive of the passage for the bill, as well as bringing the program full circle.

Shane Piccinini, Government Relations, Food Bank of Northern Nevada:
To say that we were in a pickle in 2020 is an understatement. We at the Food Bank of Northern Nevada are all in on local agriculture and doing everything possible to make as many communities in Nevada as food secure as possible. We are grateful to the Department and to the Assemblymember for all of the work that has gone into this bill.

Caleb Cage, representing Nevada Cattlemen's Association:
I am here in support of the bill.

Chair Anderson:
Is there anybody in Vegas? [There was no one.] In Elko? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone who would like to testify in support at this time? [There was no one.]

[Letters in support Exhibit D and Exhibit E were submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Let us move on to opposition. Is there anybody who would like to offer testimony in opposition to this bill here in Carson? [There was no one.] Vegas? [There was no one.] Elko? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone to testify in opposition? [There was no

one.] Let us move on to neutral. Is there anyone wishing to testify who is neutral on the measure here in Carson City? [There was no one.] Vegas? [There was no one.] Elko? [There was no one.] Is there anyone on the phone to testify in neutral? [There was no one.]

Would you like to make any closing remarks? Make it known that he has waived that. I will close the hearing on A.B. 251. We will now start with public comment. Is there anybody here in Carson? [There was no one.] Las Vegas? [There was no one.] Elko? [There was no one.] On the phone? [There was no one.] This concludes our meeting for today. We are adjourned [at 5:05 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Karen Cook
Recording Secretary

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Nicholas Fischer
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 251	C	Assemblymember Gregory S. Koenig, Assembly District No. 38	Proposed conceptual amendment
A.B. 251	D	Anna Pageau, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada	Letter in support
A.B. 251	E	Brian Markowski, Private Citizen, Spanish Springs, Nevada	Letter in support