

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Eighty-third Session
April 4, 2025**

The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Edgar Flores at 3:34 p.m. on Friday, April 4, 2025, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the attendance roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Edgar Flores, Chair
Senator James Ohrenschall, Vice Chair
Senator Skip Daly
Senator Lisa Krasner
Senator John Ellison
Senator Lori Rogich

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Dina Neal (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senatorial District No. 3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jann Stinnesbeck, Committee Policy Analyst
Heidi Chlarson, Committee Counsel
Diane Rea, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Sue Burtch, Co-Executive Director, National Organization for Women
Abraham Camejo
Jenny Stepp

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Dora Martinez, Nevada Peer Action Coalition
Samira Edwards
Leann McAllister
Allister Dias
Imer Cespedes-Alvarado
Madeline Krieger
Noè Orosco, Make the Road Nevada
Pio Rejas
Alfred Vivar Munoz
Millan Gladhill
Kevin Osorio Hernandez
Malcolm Greer
Sydney Mitchell
Al Rojas, Safe Communities Network
Hernan Alvarez-Sanchez
Sharon Flores
Kelechi Odunze
Aryah Certain
Sayla Daily
Leslie Paredes
Natenaile Adem
Jiromi Pena Martinez
Lahana Pearce
Jay Hicks
Janine Hansen
Keely Hopkins
Thomas Morley, Nevada Firearms Coalition
Tanya Freeman
Matthew Yealy
Katrin Ivanoff
Lynn Chapman, Nevada Families for Freedom
Yolanda Knaak
Lorena Biassotti
Angel Diaz
Daniel Smith
Cyrus Hojjaty
Jim DeGraffenreid
Martha Duran
Juanita Morales

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Luna Aguilera

Aaron Bautista

Alexander Avila

Jay Ocasio

Joe Buban

Robert Garcia

Flor Diaz

Tony Ramirez

Maria Moore

Makaila Settings

Unidentified Testifier

Ryley Svendsen, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Luiza Benisano

Mildred Navarrocan

Kenneth Hawkes, Clark County Law Enforcement Association

Jason Yelle, Clark County Law Enforcement Association

Jeff Rogan, Clark County

Josh Martinez, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Randy Robison, City of Las Vegas

John Abel, Las Vegas Police Protective Association

Derek Myers

Doug Roberts

Andrew Chapman, Travel North Tahoe

Devin Middlebrook, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Carol Chaplin, President and CEO, Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority

Samantha Barnes, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

Kevin Drake, Hoppy Hour

Kyle Davis, League to Save Lake Tahoe

Darya Shahvaran, Cofounder, CEO, Tahoe Gifting Company

Fred Boltz

Pamela Tsigdinos

Ann Nichols

Stephen Dolan, Friends of Third Creek

John Eppolito

Scott Tieche

CHAIR FLORES:

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 297.

SENATE BILL 297: Revises provisions relating to periods of observance.
(BDR 19-803)

SENATOR ROCHELLE T. NGUYEN (Senatorial District No. 3):

I am pleased to present S.B. 297. With me down in Las Vegas to copresent is Sue Burtch, the executive director and coordinator of Nevada NOW [National Organization for Women].

First, I want to provide some information as to why am I bringing this bill. I think it is fitting that in a female-led majority, this committee seems to be predominantly male Legislators. And the reason I think that is important is because I got some emails, and they were like, you have too much time on your hands. Why are you bringing bills like this? Why is this important? And I will tell you, I do not have too much time on my hands as many of the Legislators here know; we are incredibly busy. I got here at 7:00 a.m., it is now 3:38 [p.m.], and I am presenting a bill after having sat in multiple committees already today. So, the reason I am bringing this bill, even though it just seems like a recognition of a medical condition that half of the population will eventually experience, is because it is super important for us to be educated and [observe] recognitions like this, [especially] as perimenopausal and menopausal month will bring that recognition. I would love to be here in September and October when our Governor starts talking about why this is an important topic for us to address.

Perimenopause hit me pretty early. I started having extreme weight gain. I started sweating profusely. I started getting chills. I started thinking I was losing my mind. And after going to multiple doctors, I realized I was not alone, and I was going through something that almost all women are going to experience at some point in their lives to certain and different degrees. I started reaching out, and it took me about three doctors to find someone who would really listen to me. Not give me ideas and not say—oh, this is just a part of life. This is something that you are going to have to deal with. This is something that you are just going to have to struggle with. Get used to sweating through your clothes in the middle of the night and waking up in a pool of water. Those are just things that you will have to deal with.

I was very fortunate because I have a wonderful physician in Las Vegas named Michelle Lynn, who really sat down and listened to me and said this is something that we can work through together. This is something that we will all

experience as women, and this is something that we will help you through. That is when I first started to realize some of the struggles. It started with a Facebook page that I belong to that is called Law Moms, and it is moms with kids that are school age. Some of our discussions would range to what kind of schooling, what kind of like summer school activities, what kind of camps we are putting our kids into, where our kids were looking at going to college, what kind of courses they should do? And it also evolved into, hey, is anyone experiencing this health concern? Does anyone have this thing? It really opened my eyes to some of the experiences that women were going through.

I initially looked at some more aggressive types of legislation around covering off-label medication uses for testosterone, for other types of hormonal creams, other kinds of insurance mandates to get people talking about this. I also talked to some medical doctors who said, you know, part of the problem is this is not taught really extensively and tested very extensively on any kind of medical boards, so a lot of times medical schools do not even focus on this kind of education. Around women's health as we age, there is not a lot of research, there is not a lot of coverage, there is not a lot of innovation, and why is that?

I realized very quickly that I needed to start with education, and I needed to start with something like this. That brings me back to this bill. Raising awareness about perimenopause, raising awareness about menopause is crucial for addressing the significant knowledge gaps that exist among women and healthcare providers. Many women enter these stages of life without understanding the symptoms such as mood swings, brain fog, fatigue and often mistaking them for unrelated health issues of normal aging. This lack of education can often lead to unnecessary anxiety, delays in seeking care and diminished quality of life.

Furthermore, societal stigma and cultural taboos surrounding menopause contribute to isolation, silence, preventing open discussions about symptoms and solutions. Awareness campaigns, centering on women's health, not only empower women to recognize and manage their symptoms but also advocate for better healthcare training and policies to ensure comprehensive support by fostering education, improving access to resources and promoting community solidarity. Raising awareness about perimenopause and menopause helps women navigate these natural transitions with confidence while enhancing overall public health outcomes. I think that is so important to start with education.

So, do I think this bill is a waste of time? Do I think I could spend my time on other bills? I think this is important. I think this affects so many women, when they are brushing their hair and all their hair falls out, like happens to me very frequently. I need to know that I am not alone in that suffering. When I have anxiety or when women are going through different changes, I think it is really important and I think it is equally as important for the men on this committee to understand what their spouses, what their siblings, what their children, their daughters and what other people in their community are going through.

I am also very well aware that there's a lot of education that needs to go on. The group that I was a part of that has these open conversations about everything from brain fog to dry vaginas—And yes, I said dry vaginas in a committee hearing—may be more open and more educated to talk about some of these health concerns. But I also recognize that in communities of color, this is discussed even less. Access to health care and resources in this area has an incredible amount of cultural stigma that they are not being talked about and they are not being helped. I think bringing awareness to this through this recognition by our State sends a clear message that this is an important issue. This is something that is important. Hopefully, when I come back here in 2027, we can have some more detailed conversations about what types of legislation we need to pass in this area, and there'll be a better education campaign.

We have a history of doing this with prostate cancer. I remember former, I think it was the 2021 Legislative Session, Speaker Jason Frierson spoke at the time about prostate cancer and his own struggles. We had a recognition of that because I think it was very important to remind men that they need to get checkups, they need to catch these things early. And this is just another example where we need to show in this way, not only symbolically but as guiding our policies in the future, that this is important.

SENATOR ELLISON:

Please let me tell you, not only women go through that. I did not think I was going to live through it. I know what you are going through, but I felt like a very abused husband. I understand.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

I think it is very important for our spouses, my son—I have a teenage son, he just turned 15 as many of you know—to have these open conversations. I talk to my family very openly about the struggles that I have because we should

normalize those conversations about the natural aging process, especially with women, so maybe you have a better understanding in the future, going forward, knowing how you can be supportive of your spouse. How can you be supportive of your family members that are having these real struggles?

CHAIR FLORES:

Senator, you are going to get in trouble by saying I understand. Those are fighting words, Senator.

SENATOR ELLISON:

Well, let me tell you, my wife is deceased now, but I would rather go through it. She did go through troubles, and then they found out that she had tumors; the doctors went in, thank God, and got the tumors, and they were not benign. But she went to heck. It is serious, and it is hard on women. It is hard on the guy because he gets abused every day. Thank you very much for bringing this.

SUE BURTCHE (Co-Executive Director, National Organization for Women):

Senator Nguyen, thank you for bringing this bill and for inviting me to be here. Just for reference, when my family found out I was coming here today they chuckled, but this is serious. Awareness months have many benefits. One of them is, as Senator Nguyen touched on, the opportunity for education. There are a lot of myths and misconceptions out there. We are barely taught about when menstruation begins, and we are never taught about how it ends. You know, what it looks like, how it feels, what is normal, what is not. It is not just about hot flashes and mood swings as the Senator said. We also have risk factors of cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis. Any number of medical issues will increase after menopause and perimenopause and can go on for years.

How do we have those conversations with our physicians when we don't know what we don't know? I told a few of my members that I was going to be here today, and it sparked a conversation that I truly never imagined having. The efforts they have gone through to find answers are just astounding because there's so much misinformation out there. They had trouble getting a physician that actually talks, too. Senator Nguyen said she went through a few. That is pretty typical. I come from a generation where we don't talk about these things. It was just something that happened and you dealt with it, but it really does not have to be that way. We should be normalizing the conversation. We can seek treatments to give us a better quality of life. But first we need to know what is

out there. We really urge you to take this bill seriously and show the women of Nevada that we care about their health care, and they are not alone and do not have to suffer in silence.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

If S.B. 297 passes, do you think that healthcare providers will try to focus more on outreach and try to talk to patients maybe during the designated months?

SENATOR NGUYEN:

That would be my hope—like having the Governor issue a proclamation. Have a conversation about this from the highest levels of government, from the different branches of government I think is significant because you are talking about it. We do not talk about this at all, and even to what Senator Ellison said, sometimes you are having these issues and if you do not seek care, you might miss some of these other health concerns that tend to multiply as you enter into menopause. So, I would hope that we would have more conversations about this and that the passage of this would bring even more awareness to the issues.

ABRAHAM CAMEJO:

I come here to speak as a father of five daughters. This is a great conversation to have because as raising my children, we need to start having these discussions at a much younger age and have this conversation to move forward. I am 100 percent in support of this bill, and I look forward to more discussions about it but especially on the education side of it as my kids get older and as my mom as well is getting older.

JENNY STEPP:

I am a licensed clinical professional counselor in private practice in Las Vegas. I am also a member of the Nevada Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and serve as the healthcare action team chair. I am calling to share my support for S.B. 297 and echo the testimony already shared today.

I would also like to add perspective from my mental health practice. I am a cisgender female counselor in midlife and have many clients in the same demographic. I found that so many of us are struggling with new mental health symptoms during this midlife period. Clients come into therapy concerned that they are literally going crazy and undergo mental health assessments for symptoms that appear psychological. Without proper assessment, education

and local healthcare resources, so many of us could be misdiagnosed with serious mental health disorders when we are actually experiencing natural, expected biological and hormonal changes from perimenopause and menopause.

This bill would bring more awareness and education into the community for healthcare providers and patients so we could get the care we need and deserve. This is a bipartisan bill that affects approximately half of the population of Nevada regardless of political affiliation. For these reasons, I encourage the committee to vote yes on S.B. 297.

DORA MARTINEZ (Nevada Peer Action Coalition):

We appreciate Senator Nguyen for bringing this bill forward, and we wholeheartedly hope you support S.B. 297.

SAMIRA EDWARDS:

I am a proud member of Make the Road Nevada. As a high school student in Las Vegas, the threat of gun violence is a constant concern. In December 2023, a tragic shooting at the University of Nevada ...

CHAIR FLORES:

I do not mean to interrupt you. I believe you are testifying on a bill, which we will be hearing at the conclusion of S.B. 297. We are still on S.B. 297. If I could have you hold your remarks for that bill.

LEANN MCALLISTER:

I live in Senate District No. 8, in Assembly District No. 2, and I am a middle-aged woman very excited about this bill and to see some better public education. I strongly support S.B. 297.

CHAIR FLORES:

We have testimony ([Exhibit C](#)) in support from Julie Kemp and a letter in opposition ([Exhibit D](#)) from Ann Sweder.

Thank you for your presentation, Senator Nguyen. I will close the hearing on S.B. 297 and open the hearing on S.B. 156. I am going to hand over the gavel to Vice Chair Ohrenschall.

SENATE BILL 156: Revises provisions relating to the prevention of gun violence.
(BDR 18-958)

I want to remind everybody again that we are going to be limiting testimony in support, opposition and neutral to 30 minutes for each side along with limiting everyone's testimony to two minutes. Please do not take it as a sign of disrespect if we cut folk off, and anybody wishing to testify for more than two minutes, all of you are welcome to email your remarks so that we make sure we get the full breadth of your argument.

VICE CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I would like to open the hearing on S.B. 156.

SENATOR EDGAR FLORES (Senatorial District No. 2):

I am here to proudly present S.B. 156. I am joined by some remarkable young folk that I call friends and individuals who understand the importance of getting involved at a young age. Rather than utilizing social media and/or being loud behind the keyboard, they decided to take action.

I wanted to very briefly give everybody a road map on how I intend for us to move the conversation today. I will do some brief opening remarks. I will then hand it over to Imer and Allister who are joining us in Las Vegas from UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas]. Then we will come back to Madeline who will be doing a PowerPoint presentation [in a], section-by-section breakdown. And then, in case there are any technical questions, we brought our lifeline to just go over some additional topics or technicalities over language, should those questions come in.

I am an attorney by trade, but I also teach part-time at UNLV's public policy program and the doctoral program. I start the conversation there because as you all know, unfortunately, UNLV was a victim of a mass shooting tragedy that changed the entire landscape of what it meant to be a student, a teacher, professor, a staff member, administrator or anybody who has any type of connection with that university.

In fact, I would say that anybody who is a teacher, professor, colleague, administrator or a student in Nevada, I think all of us were shaken to our bones. Immediately after that, and I will not get into the details of it because I know that is specifically what Allister and Imer will get into, folk were calling me, were reaching out to me—students, colleagues, et cetera. The very first thing I heard, one of the very first things that happened was that I had young students,

Republicans and Democrats, working together, collaborating and talking about what we can do about that situation.

Unfortunately, we can't change what happened. But one of the things that we can do is take action. So, the students got together.

The reason it is so important when you have young Republicans and Democrats getting together is because rather than the conversation starting in the polar opposite of where any type of conversation that involves guns starts—which is do not touch my guns or let us limit somebody's right to have guns—you have a bipartisan effort that started in the middle saying what is the problem. We have gun violence. How do we address that? They had conversations about gangs, programs, better training, making sure that everybody is represented. Every single voice is at the table adequately being represented. Therein is the genesis of S.B. 156, which creates the Office for Prevention of Gun Violence (OPGV).

Please note that we are working off an amendment ([Exhibit E](#)) that we will walk you through. The students needed help, and then they reached out to Make the Road Nevada who said we can absolutely help by being a voice up in the Legislature as they have folk here 24/7. Unfortunately, we know how difficult this building can be to access, particularly for students in the south who do not have all the tools or resources to be able to be present every single day.

But the students have been leading the amendments, the students have been leading the bill, the students have been leading the work, and that is how we got to S.B. 156.

I want to make it abundantly clear from the very onset; this bill is not meant to limit anyone's rights to have a weapon. In fact, I am a responsible gun owner. I have several. I look forward to teaching my son to hunt. I look forward to going out with my son and shooting. He is too young at this time, but I am ready for that. I am looking forward to that. I would never get in the way of somebody's right to be a responsible gun owner. At the same time, I have been working with youth programs my entire life. I realize that if we do not invest in youth and programs at a young age, we are sometimes not getting in the middle of these pipelines that sometimes lead kids to bad influences, lead kids to sometimes being involved with gangs, lead kids to not handling guns responsibly. That is also part of an obligation that we have as parents, as Nevadans, as people in this building.

Putting all of that together is how we came together with this bill. I want to remind everybody once again that the intent of this bill is to create a space [for] everyone: law enforcement, students, parents, responsible gun owners, folk who teach you how to handle a weapon, folk who understand youth programs. Everybody's operating in a silo. The reason we operate in silos is because if you agree with hunting, you have your group; if you agree with trying to address mental health issues, you have your group; and if you agree with helping law enforcement get guns off of the wrong individual on the streets, they have one group. We want to create a hub where all of them are cooperating, working together with the current rules and that whatever information comes from that, they are sending it back to the Legislature and that we have reports on data what is happening in our streets. That's ultimately the goal of this bill with that.

ALLISTER DIAS:

I am currently a student at UNLV majoring in economics with the dual minor in entrepreneurship and public policy. I am the current CSUN [Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas] student body president representing the interests of close to 27,000 undergraduates. I wish to acknowledge that my thoughts and opinions today are purely my own and not inherently reflective of CSUN or more broadly, UNLV.

On December 6, 2023, I was on the third floor of the Student Union. At the time, I was the editor in chief of our student newspaper, *The Scarlet & Gray Free Press*, formerly called *The Rebel Yell*. From our newspaper office window, I witnessed close to 60 students running across the parking lot and across Maryland Parkway. I stepped on to the balcony next to our office when I heard the gunshots ringing out. I knew in my gut that those were gunshots, but I did not want to believe it.

Instinctively, I ran back to my office, I grabbed my news editor who was with me, and we ran down the stairs and out of the front entrance of the Student Union. While coming out of the building, I heard another round of shots and the scene of police cars piling up in front of our campus. We ran across the street where we witnessed police break the doors and lead students out single file with their hands raised. We stayed trapped on the other side of Maryland Parkway for close to nine hours that day. As a matter of fact, we did not go home until late that night.

Everything about that day is so vivid in my mind. I remember where I was, what I was doing, what I was wearing, who I spoke to, what I did that morning and what I felt in that very moment. Although the shooting was close to two years ago from today, everything about that day still haunts me, and I intentionally avoid certain parts of campus since they remind me of what happened.

Growing up in CCSD [Clark County School District], we rehearsed active shooter drills in every grade level with the premise that something like this would never happen to us, ever. December 6 changed all of that for me and all of my fellow peers here today.

Gun violence is not a partisan issue, and it never should be. As a legal gun owner myself, there is so much room for education that unfortunately is not being promoted. I get the opportunity to speak and socialize with many right-leaning, widely progun individuals when I go to the range to practice, who, as a matter of fact, have voiced the need for better protections of children in our schools and keeping guns out of the wrong hands. While what we hear in the news paints two extremes on this topic, it goes to show that preventing gun violence is not a political issue, but it is a human one. It is one where both sides can come in the middle and unify. It is this knowledge that we gather today, not only to recount the trauma that we here as UNLV students have experienced but to transform that into a better chance for future generations. I am hopeful that the pain that we experience today is something that current and future Nevadans, and more broadly Americans, never have to deal with again.

IMER CESPEDES-ALVARADO:

I am a registered Democrat, a student at UNLV and the proud founder of Youth Voice of Nevada. On December 6, 2023, I was on the second floor of the Student Union hosting a political workshop with over 80 students: young people from different backgrounds, belief and experiences all coming together to talk about leadership, democracy and the future we want to build.

Around 11:30 a.m., the world around us changed. We heard screaming, students running, doors slamming, and then the chilling words, "There's an active shooter on campus. They're going to kill us." We shut the doors, turned off the lights, and we hid. I called my parents and told them what I thought might be my last words—"I love you." I dropped to my knees praying, begging God to save us. I felt my most profound dream, walking across that graduation

stage as a first-generation college student, vanishing right in front of me. After nearly an hour of silence, fear and desperation, the SWAT team came in and evacuated us. As we walked out, we passed the shorter body, a man who had just taken three innocent lives, three people who deserved to be here today with us. They deserved more memories, more life.

Gun violence is not an abstract issue. It is not a headline. It is not something that happened somewhere else. It happened to us. It happened to me, and it is happening too often. Gun violence is not a partisan issue. It is not red or blue; it is life or death, and it requires us to do more than just send thoughts and prayers. It demands actions, it demands leadership, it demands the courage to say enough is enough. That's why we are here today, not just to show pain but to turn it into purpose because kids deserve a future of opportunity, not a future shaped by fear; because the students deserve to walk across graduation stages, not hide [under] their desks; because families deserve to celebrate milestones, not mourn loved ones taken too soon. Safety in the school should not be political, it should be the bare minimum because if we have the power to prevent the next tragedy, then we have the responsibility to act because if not now, when; and if not us, who?

MADELINE KRIEGER:

I am proud to be part of the UNLV student community with the S.B. 156 [OPGV presentation], ([Exhibit F](#) contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.) and related testimony ([Exhibit G](#)) along with Allister and Imer. Thank you both for your courage and sharing your experiences here today. I have heard the stories of too many people who continue to be impacted by the events of December 6. When we do not fight for solutions together, we condemn their voices to become obsolete.

In the past 20 years, there have been six mass shootings in Nevada. Gun violence, however, devastates our State even beyond these mass casualty events. Each year, an average of 581 people die as a result of gun-related injuries in Nevada. What this statistic fails to reflect are the countless people impacted and the communities fragmented when even a single person is hurt. Nevada's policy has been partially responsive to the 24 percent increase in gun deaths between 2014 and 2023. The implementation of background checks, bump stock and ghost gun bans, and extreme risk protection orders has been invaluable, but it is essential that we continue to expand the tools available to prevent future violence. Gun violence is a multidimensional issue that requires

active mitigation efforts. Senate Bill 156 would establish a framework to provide resources and expand research through the creation of the OPGV. This bill seeks to end cycles of violence, not increase gun regulation or promote any efforts to do so.

Sections 2 through 6 of this bill are definitional. Section 5 defines a resource bank as a repository of any resources relevant to Nevada gun violence. Section 6 clarifies that a state agency includes any unit of the Executive Department of the state government.

Section 7 outlines structural organization for the OPGV, which would be created within the Office of the Attorney General (AG). The proposed amendment, [Exhibit E](#), to the section requires the AG to employ an ombudsman, not a director, to lead the OPGV. Replacing the role of the director allows us to minimize, if not completely eliminate, the fiscal note on this bill. An individual or team of individuals already within the Office of the AG could serve as the ombudsman, avoiding additional employment fees.

Section 8 outlines the six primary rules of the OPGV, which include advising the AG on gun violence prevention, law efficacy and barriers to public safety. The office would promote public awareness for gun laws, resources for mental health and substance use disorders, and safe gun ownership practices. Additionally, the OPGV would support gun violence prevention research and develop related programs while offering assistance to other initiatives upon the AG's request.

Section 9 establishes regulations surrounding grant programs. The OPGV ombudsman may develop grant programs to support community and culturally based initiatives seeking to stop cycles of gun violence. The conceptual amendment for this section would allow the AG to set regulations for grant funding without requiring their involvement. This amendment provides further flexibility for the Office of the AG, minimizing any fiscal burden. Any organization applying for grant funding would need to demonstrate compliance with requirements established by the ombudsman or the AG's Office. The organization must also be able to prove its ability to effectively mitigate the impacts of gun violence without contributing to mass incarceration. Grant recipients would be required to complete regular evaluations proving the efficacy of funding applications as well.

Section 10 requires the OPGV to create and regularly update a resource bank for any statistical information pertaining to gun violence.

Section 11 allows the OPGV to use gifts or grants from any organization or individual to carry out the provisions of this bill.

And finally, section 12 specifies that the AG must submit a report evaluating the OPGV's efficacy to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau annually [on or before January 1 of each odd-numbered year].

This bill expands the conversation between our State's government and community-based gun violence prevention initiatives. I want to emphasize that this bill is not meant to target Second Amendment rights or provide an avenue for restricting firearm access. Its goal is to share information, provide resources and break the cycles of violence affecting our constituents. Senate Bill 156 provides a way to learn and adapt alongside our communities with the advisory support of the OPGV.

There are currently 15 states with an OPGV or program with similar functions. Colorado was one of the first states to establish an OPGV in 2021 and has since allocated \$450,000 toward gun violence prevention. The state has worked closely with community leaders, researchers and public health professionals to develop a comprehensive framework for violence prevention. This partnership between experts and organizations is what we hope to replicate through S.B. 156. Different states have used their OPGVs for different functions. But we point to Colorado as an example of effective collaboration.

Senate Bill 156 is essential to developing a comprehensive proactive approach to gun violence prevention within our State. As a student, I strongly believe that research and public awareness efforts should be central to policy solutions. I urge you to stand in solidarity with us today as UNLV students and work toward ending cycles of gun violence.

VICE CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

One thing I like about the amendment [is] the ombudsman. I know the AG's Office has an ombudsman on domestic violence issues which tries to help with informing the public and working to prevent domestic violence. This seems in line with that. With the success they've had, I think since 1997, with their ombudsman for domestic violence prevention, I hope if this passes, they will

have the same success in preventing gun violence with that position in the AG's Office.

SENATOR KRASNER:

It looks like it is section 1 [8], subsection 4, paragraph (b), "Encourag[ing] the disaggregation of data relating to gun violence by race and ethnicity to improve the understanding of barriers to preventing gun violence." What does that look like to you, please?

SENATOR FLORES:

We just want to have a general understanding of [whether] there is a disproportional impact in certain communities—Is it happening at a certain age group? Is it happening with certain groups in certain areas?—so we have a better understanding of where to address these concerns and questions. I think oftentimes you'll hear conversations around irresponsible parents not adequately putting their guns away. Sometimes you'll hear conversations about issues with gangs. Sometimes you'll hear issues about individuals who have training but maybe not the adequate training. Sometimes you'll hear questions saying is it happening strictly in the rurals, inner cities, et cetera.

For example, in these conversations, we are finding out that we are not adequately addressing these types of conversations, say in communities that predominantly speak Spanish or Tagalog or Mandarin. If that is an issue, we need to know that. Are we doing these campaigns in the right languages? Are we doing campaigns that are targeted in the areas that things are happening? The more data we can get, the clearer understanding we can have. Should we be working more closely with certain communities? Should we bring leaders into this space who are leaders within specific communities?

Right now, we move so much of this conversation in silos, working off of perceived things we believe are happening. I have seen it happen even in this, not our particular committee, but we have had hearings related to guns in the past, and you'll hear some folk consistently bringing up gangs, and then the conversation ends there. Then you'll hear other folks consistently bringing up a specific type of firearm, then the conversation ends there. Then you'll hear people specifically bringing up conversations around gun safety and training, and then the conversation ends there. Then you'll hear conversations about mental health, and I can go on and on.

The more data we can get, the better understanding we can have [about] what communities are being disproportionately impacted by gun violence. All of that request for data is to start knowing that and having real concrete information that we can put back to the Legislature. I think it is going to help the conversation move forward in two years if we have a better understanding of what that data looks like, unfortunately how it is disproportionately impacting one community over another, if at all.

NOÈ OROSCO (Make the Road Nevada):

Just adding on to what the Senator said, one of the things that is also incentivizing to do but not mandated is having culturally competent and relevant information. Going back to finding out what communities are being impacted, a couple of years ago, Humboldt County had the highest gun death rate followed by Elko County and Nye County. I know that Elko County, outside of Clark and Washoe [Counties], does have a significantly large Latino population or population that identifies as Latino. When we are looking at just the urban cores, it is not just there. If we were to be looking at the information, maybe there does need to be a little bit more education but not necessarily only in English. I do recognize it is not requiring that and depends on how the funds are available. We have looked at other states, and there are a lot of [similar] educational campaigns, depending on the makeup and how the states decide to move forward with the funds that are available. We are looking to get that information because we do recognize that in the last decennial census, Nevada was ranked the third most diverse state in the country. This basically means if you were to pick two individuals at any given point in the State, the chances of them being of the same race or ethnicity or gender was going to pretty much be very difficult to get.

SENATOR ELLISON:

I have a couple of questions. Number 1, we talked about this the other day. We're both concealed carriers. We believe in gun safety just like everybody else. I taught my children gun safety, how to take care of the weapons, how to put them up and how to lock them up for when they have children. It used to be in the schools. They used to teach NRA [National Rifle Association] safety, and other groups taught gun safety in the schools.

That was one of the best training programs you could ever see; if you decide to go hunting, you will get your permit through there. But it was something they taught to kids about making sure that every gun is loaded until you make sure it

is not. Stuff like this. Leave them alone, how to lock them up, how to put trigger guards on. It was so much information for these kids to learn by. Well, it's been taken out of school like a lot of the stuff. But that was my first one.

And then I dropped down here to section 8, subsection 1, "Advise the Attorney General on all matters related to the prevention of gun violence." Why is it going to the AG's Office? Why is it not going to the Governor's Office or have the Governor create a committee versus the AG's Office? Can you answer that one? Then I will go to the next one.

SENATOR FLORES:

There's a couple of reasons. The OPGV that we see in the country are all relatively new, and they all have taken on different roles depending on the state. We see the AG's Office as the ultimate law enforcement. And we want to make sure that this office is held through that lens of ensuring that we have law enforcement involvement in these conversations because we can't talk about gun violence prevention or safety without the arm of law enforcement being involved. So that was the number 1 reason.

Number 2, we see the AG's Office as who's leading the charge in these conversations anytime there are suits coming up. We wanted to make sure that in that arena, they were hosting it in a place where those conversations were happening anyway. Because of the relationship with law enforcement there and because they are tasked with protecting the State, it just seemed like it was the most natural fit along with the fact that we have seen it housed there in other states. I think it was a little bit of all that, Senator.

Regarding your first statement about the NRA or other organizations teaching gun safety, this will open the door for those conversations to happen again. Should we have a program that is teaching gun safety in schools? What does that look like? Is it effective? How much money should we put into that because there's the opportunity for them to have money donated. How do we want to see that money utilized? Is that something we should be considering? How effective was it in the past? Should we study that? All of those are conversations that we will be having, hopefully, once we create this office.

MR. OROSCO:

I just quickly wanted to add to the educational component. As I mentioned, we were looking at several other states that have already implemented an OPGV.

Colorado was already one of the ones that was referenced. They do have a campaign right now; it is not only limited to the schools, but they are able to receive or apply for grants. Specifically, I was looking at Wisconsin. In January of this year, they did allocate some funds, and they had granted to school districts, to law enforcement agencies as well as local governments. Because that just happened, it really does depend on how the OPGV decides to allocate and the requirements that they have for applications. We are already seeing models where they have a process for providing grants and education specifically in schools.

SENATOR ELLISON:

We did not have the problems we have now back then at all. I mean because the kids wanted to hunt, the parents wanted them to have gun safety. The drive-by shootings or whatever, that was rare or not heard of when we were growing up. But the other [question] I had was section 11, [which] said the Office may apply for and receive grants, contributions, other money, private. The problem I have fears [with] is when your testimony was federal money, stuff like this.

Problem is my fear about most stuff is political. As we seen the other day in this body, we had three gun bills out there that violated their own laws. They passed four years ago. My biggest fear is political can destroy common sense sometimes. Maybe we can get together, and we can talk about it or whatever. But I am progun because I believe that guns for several reasons—guns do not kill people; people kill people, and the people that learn—TVs are the biggest problem. There's so much stuff out there that we have to be aware of. Like I said, my children all learn how to shoot, they learn how to do everything they could do as far as gun safety, and they've done really well.

SENATOR FLORES:

I think we are in alignment because there is not a person who does not disagree that we need to stop violence. And that is the word that we are targeting, right? I just want to make it abundantly clear that is the objective, that is the agenda. That specific language is there to allow us to sidestep the fiscal notes that would be created otherwise because if the State is on the hook to allocate that money, we put the State in a difficult position. But if we create a program where we can bring in private entities to donate money to them, they can address this issue collectively. We see this as nonprofit, law enforcement. Everybody has a third arm. A 501(c)(3)—almost every single kind of important

player in Nevada has one of those. We see them collectively coming together and saying we want to address these issues, we're scared, we need to do more, and we can all start putting money into that pot.

Once we can prove that this is a working model, that we are bringing good data, that we are being bipartisan, that we are addressing and helping everybody come to the table, then we have a much easier pitch in a few years to come to the State, say we are all working collaboratively, we are achieving the objective. Now let us get some buy-in. This is just to open the door to create the office and then let them prove themselves—that it is effective and that it is working.

SENATOR ROGICH:

Thank you for bringing this topic to light. Will you be also focusing on how many mandatory prosecutions are brought with regard to individuals that are not supposed to be possessing guns or trying to possess guns?

SENATOR FLORES:

Ultimately, the agenda is everything. How many people are we arresting? How are they getting these weapons? Why are they getting them? Who's providing them? What areas are mostly impacted by it? It is a holistic approach to the conversation so that we have actual—and I am not minimizing the data we have now. But depending on what group we ask, it is so heavily handed and focused in one direction that I do not think we have had an opportunity to sit down and really put it all in one big Excel [spread] sheet so we can dissect that data and as Legislators make informed decisions, all of us working off of the same information and getting away from what Senator Ellison alluded to, which is the political agenda, which so often happens. You're sitting on the dais, you got one group suggesting one side, another group suggesting the other. And what we are saying is let us just cut that out and go right to the middle and bring all the stakeholders in a centralized place.

SENATOR ROGICH:

What I am trying to look for is if we are going to also have data revealing how many of the charges have been dropped. Individuals that should have been prosecuted are actually downgraded and let go. Is that going to be addressed?

SENATOR FLORES:

I do not know that we have that specific language, but we are also not tying the hands of the office. We are going well beyond that. The idea is for them to look at all data—convictions, charges, anything that they want—that will formulate a real picture of what is happening in Nevada. I just do not think any one organization, agency or entity has been able to do that yet.

Should we be focusing more on mental health versus training versus getting weapons off the street that are out there in the [il]legal black market? Whatever that looks like, we want them to have the ability to really go in and identify that for us so we can get that information, make decisions—and it will not just involve weapons. It is going to help us in a lot of different ways, but we need the data to first come in so we can do that.

PIO REJAS:

I represent myself as a student of UNLV, College of Liberal Arts, and a member of the Youth Voice of Nevada.

I am here today in support of S.B. 156 which will establish the OPGV in Nevada. Whether you think this bill is necessary or not, whether you see it as an important step forward or a waste of taxpayer money, I encourage you to ask yourself, how many members of our community have to pass away before we take action? How many lives must we lose before we recognize that gun violence is not just a statistic but a reality that affects our families, our schools and our sense of safety. Let me be clear. This bill is not about restricting the Second Amendment. This is not about taking away anyone's right to bear arms. Senate Bill 156 does not seek to control lawful gun ownership. This is about prevention. It is about saving lives. It is about identifying patterns, investing in community safety and stopping tragedies before they happen. It is about recognizing that our State has a duty to protect its residents.

I still remember when the unfortunate incident happened at UNLV on December 6. Back then I was serving as student body president at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). I remember how the campus emptied when the message started getting into our phones. I remember the fear that settled in, and I remember how the Nevada System of Higher Education as a whole was shaken. How students at UNLV, at CSN, and Nevada State University (NSU) and every other institution had to deal with the trauma. Some never returned, some dropped out, some lost their sense of security in a place that should be a

foundation for their future. And again, this is just not only about policy debate. This is about lives. This is about ensuring that no student, no teacher, no family in Nevada has to experience this kind of loss again. I believe S.B. 156 is a step in the right direction, and I plead you to pass it. Not when it is too late, not after another tragedy but now while we still have the chance to prevent the next one.

ALFRED VIVAR MUNOZ:

I am a UNLV student and honored to address you today as the co-lead of Nevada Youth Activist Alliance and the Vice President of Youth Voice of Nevada. I urge the passage for S.B. 156, a critical step toward addressing the devastating gun violence pandemic plaguing our State. Like far too many Nevadans, I experienced a terror of gun violence firsthand. On December 6, 2023, I attended a political advocacy event at UNLV, hoping to deepen my engagement in civic life. Instead, that day left me with lasting trauma. An active shooter lockdown was announced, lights were turned off and the doors were barricaded. I found myself praying, huddled near the emergency exit, searching for any chance of escape.

Time stretched endlessly until the emergency door where I found solace cracked open and a gun was pointed at me. I could not tell if it was a police officer or the shooter due to a flashlight. My mind went blank with fear. I recognized the "S" from SWAT team, and the fears finally went away. We were escorted out of the Student Union, and all I could do was thank God for my survival. But I still vividly remember the gun. I continue to pray daily for my safety and the safety of those around me. But thoughts and prayers alone are sometimes insufficient.

Action is why I stand here. I also want to emphasize that S.B. 156 has been carefully crafted to respect the Second Amendment right to bear arms. As a firm believer in this liberty, I support this bill because it strikes a balance, preserving a constitutional right while taking meaningful steps to prevent further escalation of gun violence in Nevada. Finally, I ask you to listen to the voices of the next generation. We are the ones who are inheriting this issue, and we are exhausted. That exhaustion has driven us here demanding action.

MILLAN GLADHILL:

I go by Mac, and I am here today as the President of Youth Voice of Nevada and the co-lead of the Nevada Youth Activist Alliance. I am a senior at the

University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am 24 years old, born in December 2000. This means that my starting point in this country was about a year and a half after the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado on April 20, 1999.

For me and other young people my age, tragedies like this are not a shocking surprise but a normal everyday occurrence. I started elementary school with the Virginia Tech Massacre and ended it with Sandy Hook and the Aurora movie theater shooting. In high school, I was living out of state and had to be sat down by a teacher who let me know that the Route 91 festival Las Vegas shooting had occurred the night before and that I should call my family. At my first movie theater job as a teenager, I had to be trained on bomb threats and active shooters just as much as buttering the popcorn. I worked there during the premiere of *Joker* and actually had a situation where someone reported a suspicious man in the auditorium. This was the first time that I feared I would be a victim of gun violence.

The next time was less than five years later on December 6, 2023. I sat in a dark room as police messages buzzed on my phone telling me to run, to hide and to fight because an armed assailant was attacking UNLV campus. One of these messages eventually told us that shots were fired into the Student Union, the building where I was hiding. I had to face the reality that I may not make it back from school that day. Thankfully, I was evacuated by SWAT, but I will never forget the shooter's dead body feet away from me as we were making our way to safety.

There are smart, effective bipartisan solutions to this issue, and that is why I encourage you to support S.B. 156 because I believe that this is a step in the right direction.

Ms. BURTCH:

I am the executive director of NOW, and we thank Senator Flores for bringing S.B. 156 to the table. It is an important conversation, and we strongly support any bill that moves gun violence prevention forward. It is an important conversation to have.

On a personal note, my youngest is a grad student at UNLV and was in building FDH [Flora Dungan Humanities], which is right next door to the Student Union, on that day in December. What makes it unusual is this is the second time this child of mine has been on a campus with an active shooter. On a personal note,

please, let us start this important conversation about gun violence prevention. It is nonpartisan. Let's help these kids.

KEVIN OSORIO HERNANDEZ:

I am the chair of the Nevada Student Alliance with the unique privilege of representing over 110,000 students across the Nevada System of Higher Education.

I am also the proud president of the student body at NSU, and I am actually your constituent, Senator Ohrenschall. The Nevada Student Alliance (NSA) is the overarching student organization within the Nevada System of Higher Education. We have formally adopted legislative priorities that focus on campus safety and wellness, including the prevention of gun violence.

After December 6, the Nevada Student Alliance passed a resolution urging the Nevada System of Higher Education to establish a standing committee on safety and to prioritize the well-being of students in Nevada. As chair of the NSA, I know firsthand that our students have been deeply affected by the threat and the reality of gun violence. I just want to highlight for a moment the vulnerability of our students here. I believe very strongly that vulnerability is, of course, our superpower, and I really want to emphasize that our students need to feel safe on our campuses. And S.B. 156 is a vital step toward addressing those concerns by creating the office that will prioritize the safety, security and overall well-being of students across Nevada. I urge the committee to support S.B. 156.

MALCOLM GREER:

I am a UNLV student majoring in political science, and I may volunteer with Students Demand Action and am a member of the Youth Voice of Nevada.

I am testifying in support of S.B. 156. On December 6, 2023, I survived the shooting at UNLV that claimed three lives and injured many others. The fear and grief I experienced drives home the need for change. Senate Bill 156 would create an OPGV within the AG's Office to research, educate and implement gun violence prevention strategies without impinging on Second Amendment rights. We must act now to prevent these tragedies.

SYDNEY MITCHELL:

I am a third-year political science student at UNLV. I want to thank Chair Flores for bringing S.B. 156 forward as myself and thousands of other UNLV students have been waiting for a legislative response to December 6, 2023.

My memory often fails me, but I do not think I will ever fail to recall December 6. I went to my 11:30 a.m. class on the second floor of the Lee Business building naive to what would happen on the floors above me 15 minutes later. We were reviewing our final exam when we heard the strange loud bangs. I have never heard a gunshot before in real life, but the pit in my stomach told me it was. We decided to lock the door and soon alarms were blaring and campus police reported there was a shooter in my building.

I was losing my mind because I did not have my phone on me. A classmate let me borrow theirs. After sending the "I love you" text no kid should ever have to send and no parent should ever have to receive, we sat quietly crying, shaking and filled with the inexplicable fear of not knowing if we will ever get to leave this building. During the terror we saw through the shades of the window facing the hallway the shooter walking around after he stopped firing. We did not know that he decided he was done. We believed we were next, and we were preparing to die.

After being escorted out of the building and hours of sitting on the side of the road with my classmates trying to grapple the trauma and gravity of what just happened, I was able to finally feel the security of my family once again. The rest of that week, I was simply numb. All UNLV was. We tragically lost three incredible professors that day. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, will never forget Jerry Chang, Patricia Navarra-Velez and Naoko Takemaru. I am one of thousands of UNLV students in Nevada now traumatized by gun violence.

This is not a pain that can be relieved by time. I find myself reliving that terrifying day quite often. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, as a community came together in a way that it never had before to mourn our lost professors and to support each other through such heavy times. No university students should have to be trauma-bonded because of gun violence. Senate Bill 156 can be the beginning of productive work to protect Nevada citizens without threatening the Second Amendment. Because of that, I am in full support of S.B. 156.

AL ROJAS (Safe Communities Network):

I live in Assembly District 12. I think this is a fantastic bill. I love the way Senator Flores used the words public awareness campaigns. I would love to see this at many of the gun shows, and I can tell you as a staunch conservative who listens to a lot of conservative radio and is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, I do not see any restrictions in this bill to anybody who wants to support the Second Amendment. Responsible gun use is important, and we have to educate as many people; I am so glad to see that we have a lot of young people involved. It is going to create a whole new generation of responsible gun owners.

HERNAN ALVAREZ-SANCHEZ:

I am the deputy organizing director for Make the Road Nevada, but I am also a U.S. Army veteran. I served in the army infantry for a few years, and I urge this committee to support S.B. 156. As was previously stated, and as a strong Second Amendment supporter, I do not see any restrictions on the ability to access firearms through this bill. I want to make a quick anecdote because some comments were made that I think are important to talk about. I think it is important for folks to understand how to safely operate weapon systems. This helps eliminate any unnecessary deaths from accidental shootings or anything like that—somebody accidentally shooting themselves, but this is not necessarily what this bill is trying to do. This bill is trying to research the cause for gun violence, and some of those deaths that they are looking into are homicide and suicide.

When I was serving in the army, I had a few brothers whom I got very close to and who are no longer here because they killed themselves. Veterans tend to kill themselves at higher rates than other groups of people. If knowing how to operate a weapon system were to prevent all gun violence, then my brother who shot himself in the head after just a month prior to his wife giving birth to twins, that would not have happened because he was a professional operator of weapon systems. It does have its place, but what this bill is trying to do is research the causes of gun violence and possibly create solutions toward them.

SHARON FLORES:

I am a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am here today to express my support, which is my opinion and not reflective of UNLV, for S.B. 156 which would establish the OPGV in Nevada. Gun violence has personally affected my family when on December 6, 2023, I found myself

seeking shelter in a small storage closet along with 14 other individuals unable to contact our families due to the lack of signal at UNLV. In the rush to escape, many of us did not have the space to think about grabbing our belongings. With the few phones available and weak signal, students and staff were urged to call their loved ones to say their goodbyes or to check with friends to make sure they were alive and somewhere safe on campus.

All I could do was come to terms with the idea that December 6 might be my last day. Just like my peers, I called my family too and told them I loved them for what I felt would be my last time. As I was escorted off campus by officers, all I could see were broken windows, tables, thrown chairs and complete chaos, things that earlier on that day had been part of a fun and engaging event where students like children played with Legos and ate waffles. While I imagined the worst, the only thing I could do was pray that no student had lost their life. But after time passed, I learned that UNLV professors had tragically passed away.

It took months of seeking psychological support to cope with panic attacks and trauma that came with sights of sirens, fireworks and helicopters, which only made me relive that day. No individual or family deserves to go through the trauma that comes from experiencing gun violence for which I urge the committee to pass S.B. 156 and take meaningful action to prevent gun violence in Nevada.

KELECHI ODUNZE:

I am a student at UNLV. This is an opinion for myself. By no means do I speak for the university itself. The reason I am here before you today is to express my support for S.B. 156 to establish an OPGV in Nevada. Gun violence is a nationwide epidemic that not only affects students all over the world but especially our students here in Nevada. As a graduate student at the CCSD, I have experienced numerous drills, lockdowns and other situations regarding gun violence. In my junior year of high school at Desert Oasis, we experienced a two-day lockdown due to a firearm being present on campus. Also, in my junior year of high school, in attendance at a high school football game, a gun was also fired in the parking lot of my campus. Gun violence has been unfortunately an inevitable and an inescapable part of my journey through education. My very first semester at UNLV, on December 6, 2023, our university faced its own crisis.

On December 6, I was organizing a study event on the UNLV campus when an unexpected and terrifying series of events unfolded. What began as an event for students to take a break for themselves during the busy study season quickly spiraled into chaos and panic. I found myself packed, hiding in a closet on the third floor of the Student Union for hours with Sharon and 13 others, while my family anxiously waited for my safety. The fear and uncertainty of that day coupled with the reports of multiple fatalities left me emotionally shaken and profoundly affected. When it was finally time to exit the closet, we did not even want to leave. We did not know who was at the door, and the SWAT team had to eventually open the door for us.

When we finally did leave, what our university was left with were broken doors, glass and hearts. We lost three incredible and caring professors that day to gun violence. While I am incredibly grateful to have survived and been reunited with my family, those three professors were not as fortunate. This tragic incident, one that could have been avoided with better safety measures and preventative actions, has driven my fellow students and I to advocate for ... Gun violence is an epidemic that affects countless communities, and I believe it is crucial for Nevada to take decisive action. Thank you for considering this crucial initiative. And I look forward to seeing Nevada take meaningful action to protect its citizens.

ARYAH CERTAIN:

I am a proud born-and-raised Las Vegas local and a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, studying information systems and finance, with a minor in entrepreneurship. I am here today, not just as a student or a constituent but as someone who is directly impacted by the shooting at the Lee Business School. I had a class in the building on the second floor. I remember the chaos, the “run and fight” text, the fear, the running, the screaming, seeing what felt like hundreds of police cars and the helplessness of not knowing if I or my classmates were next.

That moment changed me, and it changed how I view the urgency of gun violence prevention. No amount of gun drills in high school could have prepared me for this. And as you can see, it changed the lives of multiple people standing behind me in line to talk about this. To reiterate some vital statistics, Nevada currently holds the fifteenth highest gun death rate in the nation. And on average, we lose over 580 lives every year to gun violence, more than half from suicide and nearly a third from homicide. These are not just numbers, these are

classmates, neighbors, family members and friends, and we can't keep acting like this is normal. We've had six mass shootings in the past three years.

That's why I stand in strong support of the Senate bill. Senate Bill 156 proposes something that Nevada desperately needs, the creation of the OPGV. This office would do more than just research statistics. It would lead real coordinated action. It would advise lawmakers, educate the public and create outreach in ways that are culturally competent and community driven. Through regular evaluation and community input, it keeps our voices at the center. For me, this is personal. When you have been on campus, calling hundreds of people wondering if your friends have lived, being overcome with relief when they answered and filled with utter despair when they did not, policy stops becoming abstract, it becomes urgent, it becomes necessary, and I refuse to accept that we can't do more. Are you supporting this bill, supporting my classmates, supporting my community and supporting a safer Nevada?

SAYLA DAILY:

I am a third-year student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Today, I am speaking in support of S.B. 156 as someone who has experienced the very real and terrifying impact of increasing gun violence, not only in our State but in our country. This bill will ultimately create the OPGV under the AG. This is a step that will ultimately give the State a dedicated entity, focus on education, prevention, data collection and community-centered solutions by supporting public awareness, culturally aware and competent outreach and local group grant programs. Senate Bill 156 prioritizes both safety and justice. It focuses not on punishment but prevention, collaboration and healing.

As a student at UNLV on December 6, 2023, a shooting took place at our school, something that no student, professor or anyone should have to endure. As someone who was on campus at the time of this incident, along with the thousands of others who were present, the fear and trauma still linger today. Even prior to experiencing this incident, I have always had a lingering fear about experiencing a mass shooting, especially with the increasing numbers of them across the country. I remember seeing the chaos, the fear and the feeling of dread with concern for myself, classmates, friends, faculty and much more.

During this time, I stayed in my room for nearly ten hours before the SWAT team knocked door to door through our residence halls. It was a moment that

shook our entire campus and made clear how urgent these solutions are. Our communities, especially our students, deserve to feel safe, to be informed and to have the tools to prevent tragedies before they happen. Senate Bill 156 is an imperative need for Nevada's future, but it is one step toward gun violence prevention across the country as well. Thank you goes to those in support today and the cosponsors for bringing this bill forward, and thank you goes to the committee for your time and thoughtful consideration.

LESLIE PAREDES:

I am a student at the College of Southern Nevada High School, a proud member of Make the Road Nevada, and I am the copresident of the college Dems at CSN. I have lived in Nevada my whole life, and I am here in support of S.B. 156 because as a college student from a low-income neighborhood, I have seen firsthand how gun violence deeply impacts students like me. In high school we practice lockdown drills more often than we prepare for our futures. In college, I planned my walk to class based on lighting, not just distance. I have had professors pause class to address threats made on campus. I lost my best friend to gun violence before they ever had the chance to walk across the graduation stage. Their dreams ended before they truly began. I want to become an attorney one day because I believe in justice. But I also believe we can't have justice if we do not have safety. Please support S.B. 156 as we deserve to learn, to live and to dream without fear.

NATENAILE ADEM:

I am a student at UNLV and a member of the wider UNLV community. December 6 was a tragedy that affected us all. Three of our professors were tragically killed in their place of work: Professor Patricia Navarro-Velez, Jerry Chang and Naoko Takemaru. Gun violence has no place in our community, and this has to stop. Senate Bill 156 seeks to build an OPGV so that December 6 never happens again. It will allow us to point a scientific lens to what is a growing health issue in our State. And this office will research and study the causes of gun violence in our State and find solutions to this deadly problem. It is for these reasons that I urge the committee to pass S.B. 156, and protect us from further acts of gun violence like this.

JIROMI PENA MARTINEZ:

I am here to share my experience as a survivor of the December 6, 2023, shooting at UNLV, and to urge lawmakers to pass S.B. 156. That day my friends and I hid across campus as a gunman opened fire. We were flooded with

fear and confusion, unsure if we would make it out safely. Misinformation spread quickly. Some reports exaggerated the number of injuries while others downplayed the reality of what was happening. No student should ever have to experience that level of terror. Since that day, the trauma has not faded. Loud noises, doors opening and closing, even the sound of a timer ticking can trigger overwhelming fear. Many of my friends are still scared to return to campus and the anxiety we carry affects every part of our lives.

Gun violence has become too common in Nevada, and we cannot afford to wait any longer to take real action. That's why S.B. 156 is so critical. This bill would create an OPGV within the AG's Office, making Nevada the thirteenth state to take this necessary step. This office would provide data-driven solutions to prevent tragedies like the one we endured. We need research-based policies, stronger protection for students and real investments in preventing gun violence—not just reactive measures after another tragedy strikes. Passing S.B. 156 is a step toward making our schools and campuses safer for everyone. To lawmakers, I ask how many more students have to live in fear before we take action? How many more lives need to be lost before we prioritize real solutions? Gun violence is a crisis, and we need to take action now. I urge you to pass S.B. 156 and help protect students, families and communities from the trauma and devastation that gun violence leaves behind.

LAHANA PEARCE:

I serve as a student body vice president at Nevada State University. I am here today to express my strong support for S.B. 156, a bill that takes important action to address gun violence while respecting the Second Amendment as student safety is a constant concern. We come to college to learn and grow, but the fear of gun violence affects us every day, whether it is in classrooms or walking across the campus at night. Senate Bill 156 offers a practical approach to prevention while ensuring that responsible gun owners' rights are respected. I urge you to support S.B. 156 not just for our campuses but for the safety of all communities across Nevada.

JAY HICKS:

I am a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, as a journalism major and a minor in public policy. Born and raised in Las Vegas area, I am the president and on-air host of the over-the-air college radio station KUNV 91.5 HD2 The Beat but also a representative member at Youth Voice of Nevada. I have been summoned by the founder to comment on S.B. 156.

Given the background on me, I can't say that I am a victim of gun violence myself. When growing up, I have been in four instances of gun-related violence: one [each in] 2008, 2019, 2022 and, unfortunately, December 6, 2023, in my first year of college. To keep it short, I do want to say that I am a believer of the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms and also federal laws in the State, children [people] carrying their rights to protection on their personal property in case of intrusion. But I do believe there should be stronger protection laws with S.B. 156 for gun owners to be responsible and teach people not to use guns with malicious intent and to protect anyone else from being killed by the bullet of the gun.

JANINE HANSEN:

I am the state chairman of the Independent American Party. I do not believe after a lifetime of political activity that the government is capable of not having a political agenda. Page 3, line 27 of this bill talks about professors and researchers identifying new data and research. I want to talk about that. But first, I would say that it is very unfortunate what happened at UNLV. And I think one of the reasons it happened was because it is a gun-free zone where people who are of malintent know and target gun-free zones.

Dr. John Lott, who wrote the book, *More Guns Less Crime*, after much research says this in a new article in March 2025,

Civilians stop more active shooters than police and do so with fewer mistakes, according to new research from the Crime Prevention Research Center. In non-gun-free zones, where civilians are legally able to carry guns, concealed carry permit holders stopped 51.5% of active shooters, compared to 44.6% stopped by police. Not only do permit holders succeed in stopping active shooters at a higher rate, but law enforcement officers face significantly greater risks when intervening. Our research found police were nearly six times more likely to be killed and 17 times [percent] more likely to be wounded than armed civilians.

Those numbers paint a fuller picture than the FBI crime statistics, which fail to take into account [include many of the] defensive gun strategies [uses]. From 2014 to 2023, researchers found that armed civilians stopped 180 of 515 active shooting cases. Of the

attacks in places where people were allowed to carry, we found that permit holders stopped 158 of the 307 instances.

We know from what the research says that people who carry guns can stop crime.

KEELY HOPKINS:

I am the state director for the National Rifle Association here today in opposition to the bill. Proponents state the purpose of this new office is to develop strategies to prevent and address gun violence in Nevada. While the stated goal of addressing violence in our communities is a worthy cause and one that we share, the reality is this will become a taxpayer-funded office that is used to push antigun policies and initiatives as we have seen in other states.

I appreciate the sponsor stating that he wants this office to be a place for a collaborative discussion. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in other states with similar offices. What we have seen, however, is the establishment of dedicated positions within state government for gun control activists to use public funds to pursue their agendas. And if established here, it would require every taxpayer in Nevada to be a mandatory contributor to that cause. There has been a lot of testimony today about starting a collaborative conversation to find solutions to violence. So let us do that, but it does not require establishing a new office that will likely be weaponized for political purposes. We encourage your opposition.

THOMAS MORLEY (Nevada Firearms Coalition):

We have sent in an email on our position, and I would like to echo what Ms. Hopkins said, as far as their position, and we are in opposition. We feel this is an infringement or an approaching infringement on the Second Amendment.

TANYA FREEMAN:

As Senator Ellison has stated, when I was in high school and elementary school, we did have gun safety classes. We were taught how to handle a firearm safely, store it, load it and unload it. I do not believe that this bill is going to do any prevention of gun violence. I think its research projects are fine, but I do not believe that having another state agency to prevent gun violence is going to do anything. We have organizations such as The Pink Pistols for education.

I also see that the bill has left out other vulnerable people in the community. The USCCA, [U.S. Concealed Carry Association] also teaches gun safety, and I will make these available to the good Senator so he can look at them.

I object to this bill because I agree with the others that this could be weaponized against gun owners. We need to teach gun safety; we need to teach people. I was in Columbine, I was living in Colorado not far from that school, and I understand the need to have something done with gun violence. It has to stop. But this agency I do not believe is the one for it.

MATTHEW YEALY:

Las Vegas native, born and raised, I work for one of the oldest gun shops in town. I am not representing them. I am representing myself and my son who is 12 years old. This is an office that is being created for the AG's Office, which is odd that it would not go to the Governor's Office that would disseminate the information better.

A lot of things that I see in this bill are not emotional. The thing that I am concerned with is it does not show a formula for how this info is disseminated to determine what programs would be created. One of the other representatives brought up the potential for abuse for [section] 11, about the office can receive gifts, grants, contributions and other money from governmental and private agencies. We've seen that for other organizations coming in and spending a lot of money to try and buy their agendas in here. This is a weaponized section that I would strongly suggest gets removed.

I see references to professors and researchers, but it does not say who they are or what their backgrounds are. So, this could be weaponized as well. I do not see anybody from the gun industry talking about being on here at all. There's another section where it talks about relating to mental health and substance use disorders. How is that having to do anything with gun violence prevention? That seems like something that would be thrown in here just to make it feel better.

If this bill does pass, this organization is created and does not really do anything to stem the gun violence prevention issue, does this sunset? Because I would hate to see wasted taxpayer money going to something to prevent an issue where the real solution is education in the schools, education to firearm owners and to enforce the laws we have on the books to prevent it.

The other thing that I would say on a more personal note is I have heard a lot of testimony tonight invoking December 6 as well as other events. This is a poorly written bill to try and establish a weaponized form of government to do it. I would strongly suggest that you do not pass this in its current written form and to amend it to be more concise if it was going to pass.

KATRIN IVANOFF:

My heart goes out to all the victims, the ones that survive and the ones that did not and to their family. I had a very good friend of mine when the day that UNLV [shooting] happened, so it did affect me personally as well. However, more government agencies, more money-throwing at a problem would not solve the problem. I find it very interesting that the same side that is talking about less police, defund the police, is the same side pretending to prevent violence because to me that is just a political game that you guys are playing. This bill does nothing. Any bill does nothing to solve violence. Whoever wants to be violent is violent. That's why we have jails. We had the laws; those people chose to break the laws regardless.

We need more education at early age. He said 5 years old, 100 years ago used to know how to shoot and when to shoot and to respect the guns and to know what is ... [unintelligible statement] ... and they have respect. We also need to educate our young people to respect life, to respect elderly. They need to be taught all around, not just one or another. It is a bigger problem, and the bill is well-intended, but it is not doing what it says it is going to do. In my experience with politics, it is not very long, but from what I can experience, every time you name a view or present something, I know it is going to do the opposite of what you say you want to do. I really appreciate you guys thinking about that thing, but this is not the solution. Please vote no. And let us sit down and think of the solution.

LYNN CHAPMAN (Nevada Families for Freedom):

Dr. John Lott said nonshooting mass murderers do not get the attention that mass murderers with guns obtain. Creating an office just for gun violence does not seem to be the best way to spend the money. Mass killings have been happening for years and not always with guns. "More than a dozen high-profile vehicle attacks on crowds have taken place in recent years," said Holly Yan from CNN on January 5, 2025, right after the New Orleans attack of January 1, 2025. She was referring to the New Orleans attack, which happened a few weeks after the December 2024 attack in Germany. And of course, we

remember the vehicle bomb in Las Vegas as well. May 2023 in New York, a 15-year-old girl murdered 19 people [*sic*]. She set fire to a school dorm because the school took her phone away. Violence comes in all shapes and sizes and for many different reasons. Public awareness campaigns, education classes for individuals and families are fine, but make them to fit all the different ways of violent actions against others. Guns do not cause violence. People do. Vote no on S.B. 156.

YOLANDA KNAAK:

I am representing myself. First of all, I feel bad that that shooting happened. I feel bad about the schools that have shootings. I do not see that that program in other states has really made any difference. What really would have helped those three professors is if one of them was CCW-allowed on campus. It is possible that the three of them would be alive today. So, please vote no.

LORENA BIASSOTTI:

This is your daily reminder that people who follow gun laws are law-abiding citizens. The idea that antigun programs or antigun propaganda, much like what you see in California, will stop gun violence is an illusion. Criminals do not intend to abide by any of your laws. We do. You are only targeting the good guys, the ones that stop the shooter. These measures feel good, they're comforting, but they are naive. The sooner you understand this, the sooner you'll stop enacting antigun initiatives. On the last note, the UNLV shooter, Polito, was a 67-year-old disgruntled unemployed professor with a target list of facilities.

Another problem I have with this is that this is a very partisan bill, leaving the creation of this office to the sole discretion of AG Aaron Ford, who publicly bashes and targets Republicans. It says in section 7 on line 20 of the revision [*sic*], "the Attorney General shall appoint a director of the Office who shall serve at the pleasure of the Attorney General." Absolutely not! Strike this down and remember you need a good guy with a gun to stop a bad guy with a gun.

ANGEL DIAZ:

I am a member of Youth Power Project and Make the Road Nevada. I made this call today to show my support for this bill, and that is pretty much it.

DANIEL SMITH:

I am a CCW holder. I am a firearms instructor. I was on the board of directors out at Desert Sportsman Pistol and Rifle Club, training and awareness. I am also a veteran. I have seen the violence. For the students who encountered these types of issues and things, I pray for you and hope that you can get into groups to help with your PTSD or whatever issue that you have. But to create—I will just take and agree with what has already been said. I want to oppose this bill wholeheartedly.

CYRUS HOJJATY:

I appreciate your support, Chair, as well as the sponsor of this bill. I look forward to working for him. I do absolutely believe gun violence is a problem. I sympathize with the people with the tragic events that happened two years ago and even here in Mandalay Bay, I am actually staging for taxis right now here, believe it or not.

Yes, violence is a concern but there were some concerns I have had with the presentation. The gaps we see among certain different types of growth and ethnicity and so forth exist around the world. Now this uses taxpayer funds. I believe that it depends on how the taxpayer funds are being used. At a town hall, I spoke that one of the causes of this aberrant behavior, there are many different factors when we look at income inequality, times are tough, opportunities are limited, things have gotten worse in the last 50 years, hence the trade policy we are talking about. When we look at mental health, that is very important. When we look at the family structure, hardly anybody is talking about family structure. People who are raised in broken families are more likely to experience this aberrant behavior. You look at divorces, you look at parents who are not present teaching their children important lessons. I believe that the taxpayer fund should be focused on this—raising children appropriately. So maybe if you can add these policies, this is very important.

I remember at a town hall I spoke to there were Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui and Congressman—Californian—Eric Swalwell. We agree there are many different factors that lead to violence. So other than that, please bring these issues into the table. I hope they are in the bill. I could be wrong.

JIM DEGRAFFENREID:

I am Nevada's Republican National Committeeman here today in opposition to S.B. 156. We all want to address gun violence, but S.B. 156 is yet another

attempt to advance anti-Second Amendment policies under the guise of gun violence prevention. By creating a new OPGV within the AG's Office, this bill sets the stage for increased government overreach and unnecessary bureaucracy that targets law-abiding gun owners rather than criminals. Rather than addressing the root causes of crime, S.B. 156 paves the way for restrictive gun control measures that do little to enhance public safety but instead infringe on the rights of responsible firearm owners in Nevada.

We were told earlier about the legislation that has been passed in recent years to restrict Second Amendment rights, yet that same slide pointed out that between 2014 and 2023 the rate of gun deaths increased by 24 percent. If that information is accurate, it is clear that what we are doing is not working. Rather than wasting taxpayer dollars on a new government office with fake powers and duties, Nevada should focus on enforcing existing laws, strengthening mental health services and holding criminals accountable. Creating another bureaucracy will not deter violent crime but could be used as a stepping stone for future antigun legislation.

Protecting the Second Amendment is essential to preserving individual freedom and ensuring that Nevadans can defend themselves and their families. Vote no on S.B. 156 to prevent unnecessary government expansion and the erosion of gun rights in Nevada.

MARTHA DURAN:

I am reading my support testimony ([Exhibit H](#)), which is in Spanish and English.

JUANITA MORALES:

I am reading my support testimony ([Exhibit I](#)), which is in Spanish and English.

LUNA AGUILERA:

I am a member of Make the Road Nevada, and I am here today to share my experience with gun violence and the urge to support S.B. 156, a crucial bill that will help create an Office for Gun Violence Protection. On December 6, 2023, I was in my sexuality class at the UNLV Beam Hall when the fire alarm suddenly went off. At first, we assumed it was a drill or a real fire. No one was too concerned. But as time passed, confusion grew. I remember my professor's uneasy expression. It was clear there was no real protocol for what was happening.

When I tried to leave, I was met with chaos; students running, shoving and panicking. Someone pushed me back and said there's a shooter. That's when it hit me. This was not a drill or a fire. My heart pounded as I turned to escape at the emergency exit. I saw armed officers hiding behind the walls. That moment froze me until the girl grabbed my arm and pulled me down the stairs. That's how I made it out. Outside the fear did not fade. Police cars surrounded the area. Officers shouted for us to move. My phone buzzed "Shooter in Beam Hall, run, hide and fight." That alert made everything feel even more real.

I did not know how many shooters there were or where they might be. I just ran further and further, unsure if anywhere was safe. Even after escaping, the fear, confusion and shock stayed with me. Lives were lost that day. We were lucky not to be among them. That's why I urge you to support S.B. 156. It will help us become the sixth state in the nation to have an office that can provide recommendations to help combat the ever-increased dangers that might be with gun violence. This bill can help save lives and protect students, parents, families and staff from experiencing the terror I went through. No student shall ever have to fear this. You must support S.B. 156 to combat our schools safer.

MR. CAMEJO:

I am a father. I am a small business owner—I do a safety risk management. I write safety policies and plans for companies. When this active shooting happened at UNLV, I got activated on my phone as part of Nevada CERT [Community Emergency Response Team] to respond for this. I have also been in a barricade situation with my kids in the situation a few years ago. I am tired, I am tired of America loving guns over their children. I am a father. I am here in support for this because gun violence is a disease that we have here in the United States.

In Clark County School District, we have had 36 guns this school year alone. It is available on the school's website. It is only a matter of time before an active shooting incident comes to Las Vegas in the Clark County School District and affects our children. This is regardless of political party. This is a fact it will happen. We need to prevent it. We need to create the office where we can continue this conversation, educate our community. Yes, guns do not kill people. It is the people. It is the mentality.

We are a Marine family. We have guns, but education is crucial. As a safety risk management and the business owner, I literally see this on a daily basis. I go to

businesses and write safety policies for emergency procedures to exit. Where you guys are at, in Carson City, you guys are in a dead zone right now sitting there in case somebody, some incident happened. You guys cannot exit your seats right now in emergency procedures. This room where I am at only has three exits. It is a problem that we have, and we need to continue to address this. It is not to take away anybody's guns but to address the problem and to actually get the data that we need to educate everybody because we cannot continue. We cannot continue to love guns over our children.

AARON BAUTISTA:

I am here to express my support for S.B. 156, which would establish the OPGV in Nevada. I am a public school teacher for CCSD, and I am a member of the Board of Regents. This bill is extra important to me after the tragedy at UNLV. As an educator, I have spoken with so many fellow teachers who feel unsafe due to gun violence, and it saddens me that we have to practice so many drills in the event of an active shooter. I have students who cry when we do these drills and have to keep telling them it is pretend. But I figure maybe one day it will not be pretend. Students and teachers should not have to worry about getting shot when at school. Senate Bill 156 would ensure that something is being done to prevent gun violence by funding an office for prevention programs, resources and research to help reduce gun violence in the community. This is not a red or blue issue. This is for our students, our future and the community. This would make everyone safer and create a better Nevada for all. For those reasons, I support the passage of S.B. 156 to help prevent gun violence in Nevada.

ALEXANDER AVILA:

I am here to testify in support for S.B. 156. As a UNLV alumni and a student who was on campus on December 6, 2023, a decision between making up for my work and staying for my finals is what caused me to not be present for the time of the shooting by ten minutes. The split decision that I made that day from being at work and being at the Student Union, even though I was not present, I started beginning receiving phone calls and texts from my friends and colleagues who were still on campus. I heard panic in their voices and the desperation of them trying to get out as they feared for their lives and the uncertainty that was occurring at that moment, I had already begun to think about the people who may have already been lost to us and the families that would have been shattered by this.

Never in my life have I thought something like this would occur on our campus in our State, in our city, and yet my ignorance of that, realizing of how short of time we have, I took it for granted. I know some of you will return home to your families this weekend, and I ask the committee to reflect on who's waiting for you when you return, either that is today, tomorrow or at the end of the session. Who's waiting for you to come back and what is important to you. The bill is an issue of public safety and making sure we come back home without the fear of gun violence behind our backs. It is not a perfect world. Crime and violence will continue, but if we continue, if we are able to break that cycle, though, and ensure the next generation can live in a better world than we left it, then I say it is worth passing this bill. And so, with that, I say, please do not wait any longer. Think about what is really important. And who we are doing this for, most importantly.

JAY OCASIO:

I am a student at UNLV, and I was on campus on December 6, just like most people here. Because of that, I am in strong support of S.B. 156, and I urge the committee to pass S.B. 156 and take a stand for the safety of our communities. Senate Bill 156 takes real steps toward making Nevada safer.

JOE BUBAN:

I am a small business owner, and I own a media company here in Las Vegas called FilAmTV Network. I have interviewed people from Make the Road Nevada, Youth Voice of Nevada and other organizations. However, I do not speak like the others because I am no longer a student. But as a former student, back in my day in high school, and I am like one of the last of the decade before all this mass shootings became like part of the norms. One of the reasons why I support this bill is because it will also be for gun safety, not only for students but throughout the communities throughout Nevada. I am here to speak because I think in regard of the opposition that history has shown us who's for gun control and who's against gun control.

Let me tell you something. The antigun propaganda that the people who are progun are advocating against, like bureaucracy control, gun rights taken away, are actually the same forces. History has shown that these are the same people who are for people that should surrender their guns, especially like those who are part of any resistance groups which I am not going to name.

To the opposition, where were you on gun issues whenever there is a gang violence going on throughout streets or riots happening? Where were you before when there was a governor who was then president saying to like a party ... I think it is moronic and hypocrisy that the same people that are supporting this, who are against these gun bills are actually the same people when it is another group that are for gun resistance, that they are the same people who are for them that they should surrender.

ROBERT GARCIA:

I am lead organizer with Make the Road Nevada. I want to ditto and urge the committee to please support this bill.

FLOR DIAZ:

I am the youth organizer with Make the Road Nevada, and I support this bill.

TONY RAMIREZ:

I am with Make the Road Nevada, and I represent a lot of the youth that you did see from our Youth Power Project at Make the Road Nevada. They are members of our organization, and we are in strong support of this bill.

MARIA MOORE:

I am a manager at Nevada Partners for Education and Youth Development, and I strongly support S.B. 156.

MAKAILA SETTINGS:

I am an executive member for the Youth Action Board, and I strongly support S.B. 156.

UNIDENTIFIED TESTIFIER:

Today I stand before you as the high school student. We should be focused on learning, going and dreaming about the future. But instead, we are forced to carry something that no child should ever have to carry. Fear that school we walk into every day could be a place of tragedy. Fear that because we play in the neighborhoods we call home could finally become fears of violence.

This is our reality. Every day we could put the weight of anxiety on our shoulders. We are taught to hide, to lock doors, to brace ourselves from the very imaginable. We live in a world where we are more afraid of what might happen to us than what we are excited about, what the future holds. No child,

no teenager should ever have to live like this. We deserve better. We deserve to grow up in a world where safety is not a privilege but a right. We deserve to go to school, to play, to walk our streets without the constant fear of losing our lives. We deserve the right to live, to dream and to grow without this heavy burden on our heart. It is not just a bill.

The gun safety act, S.B. 156, is about a right to live without the heavy weight of fear that we carry every day. It is about creating a safer Nevada, a Nevada where we can all live with peace and people can live with peace of mind knowing that we are protected by our community, are safe without looking over our shoulders. This is not about side; this is a human issue. It is about our safety, our future and our well-being. It is about ensuring we as children can live in a world where we do not have to fear for our lives when we step outside our door.

We are not asking for much. We are asking the chance to live without fear, to live with hope. We are asking for any freedom to grow, to learn and to dream without the looming shadow of violence hanging over us. I kindly ask for your support, stand with us, fight for us and fight for our future where no child has to live in fear, where we can go to school and come home safe. If we, your children, are not safe today, how can we possibly have the chance to build a better tomorrow?

RYLEY SVENDSEN (Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence):

We are here in strong support of S.B. 156. In 2024, there were 49 Nevadans killed as a direct result of intimate partner violence. Eighty-four percent of these deaths were from a firearm. Sadly, Nevada ranks second in the nation for rates of domestic violence, and when an abusive partner has access to a gun, a domestic violence victim is five times more likely to be killed. Because of this, establishing the OPGV is critical to increasing public safety and keeping Nevadans safe. The community-based culturally competent initiative to reduce gun violence and research on gun violence prevention will save lives. We urge you to support S.B. 156.

MS. MCALLISTER:

I am the executive director of the Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in support of S.B. 156. Establishing the OPGV is critical to implement a comprehensive public health strategy aimed at reducing firearm injuries and deaths among children and youth. Similar approaches have been effective in

other public health issues such as reducing motor vehicle-related injuries, showing a significant return on investment.

Motor vehicle crashes were once the leading cause of death among young people, but in 2017, firearms took that position. Guns are now the primary cause of death for U.S. children and teens under 18. Improved data infrastructure and research are essential to understand firearm violence, risk and protective factors. Any deaths from gun violence impact families and communities. The OPGV is important to study and implement solutions that can reduce these injuries and deaths.

MS. STEPP:

I am a licensed clinical professional counselor in private practice in Las Vegas, specializing in mood and anxiety disorder, trauma and PTSD. I am a member of the Nevada Chapter of the National Organization for Women and serve as a healthcare action team chair. I am also a survivor of gun violence. I find myself so discouraged when the conversation turns into a partisan issue, usually conflict because the goals of mental health safety, responsible ownership, crime prevention and crisis response get lost.

As a clinical professional counselor, I would be thrilled to have a state office that could support my work. I frequently hear the statement, guns do not kill people, people kill people. Well, yes. So how do you support the providers doing the work with people in crisis? This bill would assist the mental health community because the office would serve as a hub with education, collaboration, violence prevention and crisis response resources for providers like me who are serving our people, our fellow Nevadans. For these reasons, I strongly encourage the committee to vote yes on S.B. 156.

LUIZA BENISANO:

I am the campaigns and community engagement manager for Planned Parenthood Votes Nevada. We strongly support S.B. 156 and believe this bill is long overdue. Not only has gun violence been continuously rising in this country over the decades, but Las Vegas was the site of one of the worst mass shootings in our nation's history, the scars of which the community bears to this date. It is absolutely necessary to create an office that specifically tackles and addresses this issue for the State. We urge you to vote in support of S.B. 156.

MR. DIAZ:

I am a member of Youth Power Project and Make the Road Nevada. The reason why I made this call is to show my support for this bill.

MILDRED NAVARROCAN:

I am here to support S.B. 156 because no student should have to fear, to experience the fear of gun violence at school. On May 8, 2023, at around 12:28 p.m., I was at Monte Middle School when we went to a hard lockdown. The school monitor was shot by a stray bullet outside with other students during lunch. Both students and teachers were terrified, unsure of what was happening, as if someone was truly wanting to harm everyone inside the school. We were relieved when we learned that the school monitor survived, but the reality is that the bullet could have hit any one of us outside in the moment. The next day more than 50 percent of students missed school. They were too scared to return and feared that they would be the next target. Since then, our school has faced constant threats, both real and false involving firearms.

Schools should be a place of learning, not of fear, but for many of us it is no longer the reality. That is why S.B. 156 is so important. This bill would establish an OPGV within the AG's Office making Nevada the thirteenth state to take this critical step, according to the Joyce Foundation. This office would use data-driven research to identify solutions and policies that reduce gun violence, helping to prevent future tragedies in our schools and communities. Gun violence is not just a statistic, it is a reality that students like me live with every day.

I have a niece that also goes to school. I would be in fear if something ever happened to her, and I do not wish to make that message to my parents again if something happened. We cannot afford to wait any longer. Every day without stronger gun violence prevention measures put lives at risk, including the lives of other children. Lawmakers, I ask, how many more students have to live in fear before action is taken? Pass S.B. 156 and make our schools places of safety, not tragedy. Can I ask for your support?

SENATOR FLORES:

I do appreciate you allowing the students to be heard. It is obviously a very important day for them. So, thank you for that.

I wanted to first just very quickly say thank you to Imer and Allister for organizing all these students, organizing the community and all the work that they have been doing in the interim to get this bill to where it is at now. Just very briefly, a lot of folks kept talking about creating legislation that is going to be antigun. I just wanted to make it abundantly clear. This office will not have the power to create legislation. They're going to compile data, they are going to give it back to us, and we do with it whatever we want. Everything is going to be transparent, everything's going to go through this body, everything will be questioned, everything will be dissected; they are not creating legislation.

Number 2, I kept hearing that we need to do better in gun safety. We need to do better with teaching folk how to do things. That's the whole point of getting this data so that we realize where the gaps are, where the holes are, where do we need to put resources? I also heard that they do not trust government that this will be used as propaganda. That's why in the bill we specifically focused on professors and research. We want to make sure that we are bringing that approach to this conversation and move away from the typical propaganda that we hear and that we are all so accustomed to.

There is a mention about how expensive this is. Again, we are not utilizing any state money for this. That's why we made it a "may," creating the ability for them to fundraise and work with the different stakeholders and nonprofits to do this.

They kept mentioning that we make it more concise. I think if we make it more concise, it will hurt the agenda. The idea is to allow everybody to come in. Once you start putting parameters on who's allowed in, then we keep people out unintentionally. We have to keep this conversation super broad so that the NRA can do what they have to do, so that nonprofits can do what they have to do, law enforcement—all the different folks that want to engage in this conversation and data-collecting that we allow them to do it.

Lastly, whether we put it under the Governor's Office or the AG's Office or any office, there's always going to be a political arm or notion attached to that. The Governor is not always going to be who it is today, the AG is not always going to be who it is today. I understand that. This is why we create a broad kind of approach to it that is data-focused, research-focused. And the only other thing, I want to remind everybody that I will continue to work with anybody. If you have recommendations, I will work with you on that.

We have two letters in support from Lee D. McAllister ([Exhibit J](#)) and Sydney Mitchell ([Exhibit K](#)).

We have two letters in opposition from Bruce Parks ([Exhibit L](#)) and Ann Sweder ([Exhibit M](#)).

VICE CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:

I would like to close the hearing on Senate Bill 156 and pass the gavel back to you, Chair.

CHAIR FLORES:

Next on the agenda, we have Senate Bill 449. For clarity and for transparency purposes, this is a bill that I, through the committee, brought forth along with Mr. Hawkes. In the interest of time, I am not going to do an opening statement, but because I am on this side of the dais on a bill that I am helping with, I wanted to be fully transparent. I work with Mr. Hawkes in trying to get this, and I know he worked on amending it with a lot of stakeholders in the room.

I am going to refrain from asking any questions. I am just going to help run the committee. That way everybody understands that I am being transparent, and I am not here to move the agenda in one way or the other. I would like to open up the hearing on Senate Bill 449.

SENATE BILL 449: Revises provisions relating to public safety. (BDR 22-1030)

KENNETH HAWKES (Clark County Law Enforcement Association):

We thank you for your time. We will try to be as brief as possible.

JASON YELLE (Clark County Law Enforcement Association):

I am here to discuss bill S.B. 449 that addresses updates to reflect current specialized agencies, not only statewide but more specifically operating in the County of Clark, specifically, the Clark County Office of Public Safety, a patrol-oriented agency. This bill will provide proper protections and recognition for the public safety officers serving the community. Our valley continues to grow and evolve and with it the agency's task to keeping people safe has grown responsibilities. We're all aware of this. This bill recognizes and allows flexibility to public safety officers to expand as necessary.

Being a patrol-based agency, officers are tasked and called to respond to calls all over the county in both incorporated cities and unincorporated Clark County and oftentimes are tasked with handling things, unsure if they are protected. This bill will allow Public Safety to work with LVMPD [Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department] and the sheriff while protecting the interests of the sheriff. We have respectfully worked with several agencies and groups such as LVMPD, Clark County LVPPA [Las Vegas Police Protective Association] and the City of Las Vegas. I would like to extend a personal thank you to all of them. At this time, they are all in agreement at the latest amendment. We appreciate your efforts and support for law enforcement and believe updating the statute through this bill with the current amendments aligns everyone's goals.

MR. HAWKES:

Do all the Senators have a copy of the proposed amendment ([Exhibit N](#)) in front of them? I know we removed a lot of the language. I think the amendment reflects the current practices between the agencies down in Clark County, specifically with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and the Clark County Office of Public Safety.

In *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 280.125, the intent of this bill was to make sure that all agencies operating under this statute are reflected in the statute. Just a brief history on that: We began as Clark County Park Rangers back in 1979, I believe. And then in the early 2000s or late 1990s, we were rebranded to Clark County Park Police. And then in 2023, we were rebranded again to the Clark County Office of Public Safety, and some additional duties were tasked to the department. We just want to make sure that we are operating under that statute, that our agency is listed and reflected in that, so the officers' jurisdiction is reflected in what we are capable of patrolling.

If we move over to the new proposed section 2, subsection 3, paragraph (f), "The purposes authorized by and with the consent of the sheriff of the county as established in an interlocal or cooperative agreement." I believe this currently mirrors our practices now as we are going forward. We currently have several MOUs [memorandum of understanding] with LVMPD. I think this just allows us to negotiate further and potentially temporary jurisdiction and authority when responding to active crimes that need imminent or immediate response times. And then we can turn it over to LVMPD. But again, I think that just allows us to negotiate with LVMPD for further protections for our officers.

And then in section 8, the amendment is just to remove the language that states "and section 1 of this act" because we are deleting the proposed section 1.

Section 2, how it is currently stated, will remain as the current section 1 of that statute, NRS 280.125. That proposed language, and most of it lies on pages 3 and 4 of the original bill as proposed, has the only changes to that bill. The remaining pages and subsections, all those remain the same where it imposes the officer language into each of those statutes that delineate the jurisdiction of this agency.

SENATOR KRASNER:

I am just wondering, why do you feel that we need this bill?

MR. HAWKES:

One, because the agency itself is not listed under the statute that we operate under. We want to make sure that our agency is listed under that statute to give us some clarification that we can operate and that we are governed by the sections of that statute in NRS 280.125.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

The new language in the amendment on page 2, about a quarter of the way down in green, which is section 2, subsection 3, paragraph (f), talks about "the purposes authorized by and with the consent of the sheriff of the county as established in an interlocal or cooperative agreement." What do you think would be those purposes where you might be assisting the sheriff? What do you foresee what kind of activities that would be?

MR. HAWKES:

Again, we are a patrol agency in Clark County. We patrol throughout Clark County. We want to make sure that our officers are afforded the protections when they observe a crime in progress. As well as when we are requested to assist LVMPD or other primary jurisdictions in the [Las Vegas] Valley. Our officers currently question their jurisdiction and are concerned with what the repercussions are of acting outside the statutory jurisdiction laid out for us.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

Then if this passes, you are not going to be just limited to parks, you'll be patrolling the whole county like an LVMPD officer.

MR. HAWKES:

I believe the way the statute currently reads as property leased, owned or otherwise under the control of Clark County. We currently patrol all Clark County parks and all Clark County properties. Paragraph (f) would just allow LVMPD to provide us some additional jurisdiction or some protections when we are acting outside of those properties. This protects LVMPD's interest as well, so our officers are kind of held to a certain standard where they are not out there doing anything that the sheriff is not allowing us to do. It is all basically at the behest of the sheriff, what we can agree to and a memorandum of understanding.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

Assuming this passes and there is an MOU, let us say the sheriff wants you to perform a particular function that is not in a park or county property. Are your officers uniformed and in cars that are identifiable, or do they go undercover where they would not be recognized immediately as officers?

MR. HAWKES:

All our officers are category I police officers. We are uniformed, and we do drive marked patrol vehicles.

JEFF ROGAN (Clark County):

Chair, I want to thank you and Mr. Hawkes for working with us and the other stakeholders in this group. This is an amendment that we all agreed to, and we think that it gives the county and the sheriff in the city the flexibility to expand the powers of its limited law enforcement agencies as we see fit and as those needs change over time. We urge your support.

JOSH MARTINEZ (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department):

I am a captain with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, and I worked with the City of Las Vegas, Clark County and Mr. Hawkes regarding his association prior to session. We also worked on the amendment that you are currently looking at and reading. We wanted to make sure with that amendment that we were protecting the interest of the sheriff in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and our jurisdiction that we police.

In discussions with Mr. Hawkes, I know that they were looking at renaming their organization within the statute, but we wanted to make sure he had addressed some of the concerns that when they are driving between calls and

parks and county properties, if they saw something en route, since they are in marked vehicles and in uniform, they be able to act and feel comfortable acting while doing so. I believe this allows that to occur as long as they enter into that interlocal agreement with the sheriff. We have other MOUs that we operate with their organization as well. We support the bill as amended.

RANDY ROBISON (City of Las Vegas):
We support the intent of the proposed amendment.

JOHN ABEL (Las Vegas Police Protective Association):
We also represent the Las Vegas City Marshals. I want to thank Senator Flores, the County, the city and LVMPD for working on this amendment. The way this amendment—the LVPPA representing the City Marshals fully supports it.

DEREK MYERS:
I speak in opposition of Senate Bill 449, a bill that I realized—this amendment just came before me within the last few minutes—seeks to expand the Las Vegas Marshals and the Clark County Park Rangers, and experience matters. You know, we have all stepped into roles where we have had the basics down, maybe even the certifications. It took time, real time to learn the ropes. I think of elected office. You campaign, you win, you show up on day one with a title and a mission, but the real learning happens in the field dealing with the messiness of reality.

It is not so different from law enforcement. Sure, city marshals and park rangers might have the same category I peace officer certification as LVMPD, but certification is not the same as field training. It is not the same as day in and day out grind of patrolling streets, responding to emergencies and making split-second decisions. That kind of experience is earned on this ground, and dare I say like some trades, it is best learned on the streets. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has that right now, the marshals and the rangers by and large do not. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department does what this bill has already and is pushing for, the sheriff is tasked with keeping our county safe; LVMPD has the resources, the experience and the jurisdiction to handle everything that this bill wants to hand over to the marshals and the rangers, and we do not need to be duplicating efforts.

The City of Las Vegas is strapped for cash. We're talking more than \$636 million lost in the Badland's lawsuit—millions more in legal fees, hiring

freezes, budget cuts. The marshals' budget alone, according to a local report by Darcy Spears at Channel 13, is ballooning to \$204 million this fiscal year. That's up by \$13 million from last year and for what? A group who by law are supposed to stick to city property, park buildings and the Fremont Street Experience. They are not sticking to that. We have a federal lawsuit alleging a pattern of marshals overstepping their jurisdiction, arresting people on highways, searching cars on public streets, racking up potentially thousands of class action claims. And that is not just a legal headache. It is a taxpayer nightmare. These officers are properly trained or equipped. The marshals are—I think we need to have people that are in these positions to be field-trained. The marshals and the City Park Police are tied to jurisdictions that do not let them have the experience they need to go out onto the streets and things. Stopping people without that experience is a very dangerous trend.

DOUG ROBERTS:

Full disclosure, I have not seen this amendment and I am not opposed to this bill if it is only involving the Clark County police and the Clark County police alone, as long as they have this authority only when asked by the sheriff to assist, not the Las Vegas City Marshals. However, the bill in its current form seems to apply to City Marshals; with that, I am in strong opposition to this bill, and I am not alone. This bill currently has 100 percent opposition rate in NELIS [Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System] and for good reason. What happened to Mr. Myers, he did not get to this, but he was unlawfully stopped a few months ago while traveling down [U.S. Route] 11, also known as [U.S.] 95. He was falsely arrested for DUI without a warrant and without a Breathalyzer. They falsely stopped him for speeding, and they did not even have a radar gun. These were Las Vegas City Marshals. They are arresting sober people for DUI. And after his experience, we began an in-depth investigation into this issue.

I am including a copy of the Complaint and Jury Demand on behalf of Mr. Myers ([Exhibit O](#)).

What we uncovered is that there are thousands of victims per year getting arrested and cited illegally by marshals outside their limited jurisdiction, and it is no surprise, Mr. Chair, the vast majority of them are black and brown minorities. This bill is the exact opposite of what we need right now. *Nevada Revised Statutes* 280.125 defines marshals as units of specialized law enforcement. Current statutory limits on the marshals' authority and jurisdiction are to city-owned, leased and controlled property only. The bill would give the

marshals not only jurisdictions on city-owned property, not just jurisdiction in the city limits, but countywide jurisdiction. That is unprecedented. Normal city police departments such as Henderson and North Las Vegas, that are not even part of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, do not have that kind of authority. The marshals already violate the law every day, and the last thing we need to do is give them more authority.

Just in the past week, every news outlet in the area has reported on this problem, and I will just read you some of the headlines: EightNewsNow, "Downtown Las Vegas Street Reformer Asked for Transparency After Dolly Use Dispute"; EightNewsNow, "Lawsuit Filed Against Las Vegas City Marshals for Alleged Abuse of Authority"; Channel 3 News, "Lawsuit Claims City Marshals Overstepped Jurisdiction Leading to Illegal ..." We are in opposition to this.

CHAIR FLORES:

I do urge you to look at the amendment and please submit your assessment of that amendment to the committee. I will make sure we distribute it among the entire group.

MR. HAWKES:

We would just like to thank Chair Flores for all the work that you have done on this bill with us. We would like to thank the rest of the Senators and committee members on this bill. We appreciate all the work and effort in allowing us to present this bill to you. We hope you find it reasonable to push this bill forward. We think it would be very beneficial for not only the law enforcement that it will control but also the community as a whole.

CHAIR FLORES:

We'll close the hearing on S.B. 449, and I will open the hearing on S.B. 420.

SENATE BILL 420: Authorizes the creation of business improvement districts.
(BDR 22-372)

SENATOR SKIP DALY (Senatorial District No. 13):

I am going to make a few brief remarks before I hand it over to the copresenters who will walk through the bill. It is still a bit of a work in progress. We have made quite a few changes, but there are a few things that we went over today and are still discovering.

This bill is not actually mine. It came from the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the TRPA [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency] and the Marlette Lake Water System. It was a request from TRPA to have a business improvement district (BID) similar to the one they have in California and other areas of the country. There's one just across the state line at Kings Beach. This is one element of all of the things that we are bringing forward through the TRPA committee trying to address some of the issues that we have identified, especially in regard to transit, transportation and traffic. The number of people that are coming up, we want them to have a good experience. We do not want to unnecessarily impact the people that live there as well, although there's always going to be an intermix and that type of stuff. We are not going to close the lake up, but we are also not going to just disregard the people who live there as well.

In that light, we're still working on a couple of things in this amendment ([Exhibit P](#)). First of all, the language on prevailing wage for the bonds is language that I gave them on a sample which had come from another statute, so it is referencing the wrong statute. We can get that cleaned up when LCB [Legislative Counsel Bureau] looks at their stuff. Looking on it earlier today, there is a new definition that we want to move over into definitions for "employer association." That needs to be defined and then make other provisions make more sense on who has to turn in the report and various things.

And then [there are] another couple of things that we are looking at, and Mr. Middlebrook has to go back and talk with some of the businesses on that. We want to focus it more on when they put their plan together on what they can do so they have the elements of the things they can do, the activities. But we want, when the plan is adopted by the county, to have a focus on transportation. We're hoping to put in a provision that says—because the whole thing can only go five years unless they extend it, and there's language on that—the first three years, 75 percent of whatever would be done would go toward transit activities and then would drop down to another number after that. However, we are going to go back with the businesses and see how they feel about that because we have to have enough flexibility that it is worth their while doing. Until we address the transit issues, that has to come first; it just absolutely has to come first. With that, I will hand it over to our copresenters, Devin Middlebrook and Andy Chapman.

ANDREW CHAPMAN (Travel North Tahoe):

I am the president and CEO of Travel North Tahoe Nevada. I will read my presentation ([Exhibit Q](#)). In short, this is a probusiness, proenvironment and procommunity bill.

Senate Bill 420 provides a vehicle to help us achieve these necessary goals. Importantly, S.B. 420 permits the creation of a BID only if the majority of local businesses that would pay that self-assessment seek its creation, then it still requires approval and oversight by the county and Legislature. In short, this is a probusiness, proenvironment and procommunity bill emphasized by the 40-plus letters of support ([Exhibit R](#)) submitted to this committee by local businesses and residents in the Tahoe Basin.

In addition, here in the chambers earlier today in support of S.B. 420 were Pascal Dupuis, GM of the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe property; Kevin Drake, owner of the Alibi Ale Works in Incline; and Darya Shahvaran, owner of Tahoe Gifting Company, a small business located in Incline Village.

DEVIN MIDDLEBROOK (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency):

I am here today because this bill was submitted through the Tahoe interim committee as Senator Daly explained, and I want to clarify TRPA's role in the proposed bill. Our agency submitted a bill draft request during the interim session on behalf of the local jurisdictions since they expressed interest in creating business improvement districts to support environmental and transportation projects at Lake Tahoe.

Private sector investment in Lake Tahoe's environmental improvement program is critical to unlocking state and federal dollars to accelerate our efforts to protect Lake Tahoe. Finally, the draft bill does not change any authority that TRPA currently has under our bistate compact. None of the business improvement district administration approvals, funds raised or operations would be overseen by TRPA. That oversight is done by the county and this Legislature.

I will quickly walk through the draft bill. Section 3 limits business improvement districts to the Nevada portions of the Tahoe Basin only.

Sections 4 through 10 define key terms for use in this bill.

Section 5 defines the eligible activities an improvement district may undertake. Importantly, these activities support local businesses and reduce impacts from tourism, including investing in transportation, litter cleanups and community beautification.

Section 11 describes the process to create a BID through a petition of businesses in the proposed district.

Section 12 includes the requirements of the district management plan which outlines how the business improvement district will operate.

Sections 13 through 16 describe the public formation and approval process. This includes a requirement for a public hearing at the county board of commissioners.

Section 17 details the assessment, collection and disbursement process of revenues raised.

Section 18 requires annual reporting to the Legislature for any business improvement district activities.

And finally, section 19 describes the authority to sell bonds for capital investments. Included in your meeting materials is a set of friendly amendment to the bill language that we worked on with stakeholders and Senator Daly to develop [Exhibit P](#). As he mentioned, we are still fine-tuning this. As we are bringing this new model to Nevada, we want to make sure we are doing it correctly.

Key amendments include in section 5 to update and clarify the activities the BID can undertake. Housing was removed as an eligible activity because we heard stakeholders say that that is maybe too big of a challenge for the business community to tackle. We also have [Senate Bill 99](#), which you have all heard is working on housing solutions at Tahoe.

[SENATE BILL 99](#): Authorizes, under certain circumstances, certain governing bodies of a city or county to impose linkage fees on certain developers. (BDR 22-373)

Additions to section 15 and new sections at the end of the amendments clarify the renewal and modification processes.

Section 18 adds additional annual reporting and oversight requirements that were added to strengthen transparency and public input in the BID process.

And in section 19, we added Senator Daly's prevailing wage language required for any capital projects funded through the bonds' proceeds. That also has the definition of owners' association which would oversee and manage the BID. That should be moved up to the definition section.

CHAIR FLORES:

I know the opposition focused heavily on how there would not be transparency input and no real opportunity for businesses and/or other stakeholders to push or resist against this. But you have made it abundantly clear that they need to opt in, they need to agree to it, and that there has to be a transparent process.

Senator Daly, we appreciate your work. And we understand it is going to be a work in progress. A few other things will be coming.

CAROL CHAPLIN (President and CEO, Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority):

The Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority (TDVA) is located in the Tahoe Township of Douglas County. I am here to encourage your committee to advance Senate Bill 420 in the session legislative process. Members of the Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority Board of Directors will formally review the text of S.B. 420 at their board meeting next week. Accordingly, I anticipate our agency will participate as the bill moves forward through additional committee hearings.

The Tahoe Township is adjacent to the City of South Lake Tahoe, California, where a successful business improvement district was established in 2006 under existing California law. Members of South Lake Tahoe Tourism Business Improvement District self-assess under an agreed-upon formula based on an adopted district management plan. They use the funds generated to provide a consistent source of funding to help promote tourism and positively impact the economy of the community. The TDVA is interested in a similar self-assessment mechanism with application to those portions of Washoe and Douglas Counties located within the Tahoe Basin. Your support for advancing S.B. 420 provides an opportunity for local stakeholders within the districts that would be empowered to fund and implement sustainable locally driven community-based

improvements. Such improvements would include transit and related mobility services that support both economic and environmental goals.

SAMANTHA BARNES (Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority):
We appreciate the sponsor for bringing this forward and support the bill.

KEVIN DRAKE (Hoppy Hour):

I was there in person but needed to leave, so thanks for hearing me today and thanks for hearing this bill. I own Alibi Ale Works. We're a brewery and also have a restaurant in Incline Village. I also have a brew pub on the California side. Because I do business on both sides of the border, I know firsthand what is possible with a well-functioning business improvement district and the benefits it can provide to the business community for tourism mitigation. Specifically, as it has already been called out, microtransit is a huge need, and priority expansion of that on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe is a high priority. We love the people. We need fewer cars.

Trash and litter cleanup is another huge priority for us. I also want to stress that because the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe is filled with unincorporated communities, we do not have easy ability to generate local funding that can be reinvested locally. Having the ability to form business improvement districts gives us just that.

I am here to encourage you today to move this bill forward. It is good governance to allow the business community to collect funds from patrons that can be reinvested to make the visitor experience better, business become stronger and feel less impact from the high tourism rates that we see in Lake Tahoe.

KYLE DAVIS (League to Save Lake Tahoe):

Thank you for hearing S.B. 320 [S.B. 420], a bill to authorize the creation of business improvement districts on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe. Business improvement districts unlock the power of private investment to bolster public resources for critical service and projects, presenting a massive opportunity for Lake Tahoe. The League was founded in 1957 to address the impact from development and visitation that we are causing our lake's famed clarity to decline. We are the oldest and largest environmental organization at the lake.

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, needs secure funding that allows for long-term planning. Senate Bill 420 will provide local businesses with the opportunity to directly fund transportation, recreation and other environmental improvements at Lake Tahoe. The BID on the California side of the north shore of Lake Tahoe is proven to be very successful in providing funding for transportation, housing and other projects for the community. One-way advocates protect Lake Tahoe is to pioneer and support new transportation solutions for residents and visitors alike. Microtransit options in Nevada like Lake Link on the South Shore and TART [Tahoe Area Rapid Transit] Connect on the North Shore have proven successful in lowering the number of cars on the road while keeping residents and visitors moving. Beyond microtransit, a BID could fund safety improvements like sidewalk snow-clearing and managing current unsafe roadside parking. Thank you for your support of Lake Tahoe [and] for the opportunity to comment on S.B. 420. We hope you join us in supporting this important legislation.

DARYA SHAHVARAN (Cofounder, CEO, Tahoe Gifting Company):

I was there earlier today. I am glad I am able to connect. Tahoe Gifting Company is a small business in Incline Village, Nevada. I also serve on the board of Travel North Tahoe Nevada where I work alongside Andy Chapman and other passionate community leaders to advocate for sustainable long-term solutions for our region.

I will start with a quick story from my own experience. My business is located in the center that is home to several locally owned shops and restaurants. It is a high-traffic destination for both visitors and locals, but throughout the year, especially during peak summer and winter seasons, our small parking lot becomes unsafe and completely overwhelmed. Cars circle and circle then leave, [drivers] never stepping foot into a shop or restaurant. This small parking lot story is a microcosm of a much bigger issue. North Lake Tahoe is seeing visitor volume our infrastructure simply was not built to handle. As business owners, we feel the impact every day, not just on our bottom line but on our roads, our environment and our quality of life.

The cost of inaction is high. We need a stable local funding source. Expanding public transportation, improving traffic flow and upgrading infrastructure will directly benefit businesses like mine. It means fewer cars, a cleaner lake, improved streets, sidewalks and bike paths, and the kind of traffic we can get behind—foot traffic. On behalf of the many business owners and residents I have spoken with, we support S.B. 420 because we clearly see the benefits. It

will give our community a stronger voice in shaping the direction of our region. Thank you for your time and for considering the future of Washoe Tahoe.

FRED BOLTZ:

Many smaller surviving Nevada businesses are still struggling after COVID disruptions. Imposing new tax and paperwork burdens will harm businesses and employment. Some of the many unanswered questions before any authorizing legislation is approved include, what are the specific plan projects and how much are they projected to cost? Where is the requirement for a rigorous environmental impact analysis? What will the tax rate be? Why is not there a cap on year-to-year tax increases and a specific formula for calculating increases? Who will run the proposed business improvement district? And how will trustees be selected? How are the individual business benefits calculated versus the assessed tax? Which business types will be exempted from paying the tax? And which ones will be included?

The massive Barton Health Hospital complex proposal is arguably a business, despite its nonprofit legal status. Will it be taxed? Bonds typically have a minimum 20- to 30-year duration, yet this taxing district would have a maximum life of only 5 to 15 years, negatively affecting payback obligations. Why is there no limit on administrative expenses? Current vague provisions and deliverables in Senate Bill 420 forbode failure.

PAMELA TSIGDINOS:

I am a full-time resident of Washoe Tahoe, and I volunteer with Lake Tahoe grassroots groups.

We residents have witnessed significant environmental harm from public policy decisions that favor business interests to the detriment of Lake Tahoe. This BID is constitutionally questionable and undemocratic. It is literally taxation without representation. This bill originated this summer by the TRPA working with a private legal consulting company called Civitas that earns money, millions, creating what has been described as a "legal loophole" or "scheme" to increase local taxes without public votes. I want to underscore without public votes.

Let's be clear. Investigative journalists have recently reported on billions of dollars TRPA has spent and millions more it seeks to control with public-private partnerships like this BID, that are often hidden behind MOUs and other arrangements to obscure public scrutiny. It is not TRPA and its commercial

partners who will pay Civitas for this new way to generate funds for its development agenda. It is Nevada residents who also fund the TRPA operating budget.

This bill asks Nevada taxpayers, who do not get a vote, to pay Civitas to create a scheme to tax us on behalf of TRPA and business. The public does not get a vote, but in the BID use, it further will intentionally have no accountability and transparency because we do not have an ability to see how the BID funds will be used. There are multiple examples of BIDs and other jurisdictions being used for tourism marketing campaigns. These further strain local resources and add congestion rather than fund infrastructure. Do not be fooled. This bill will exploit the lake and harm our communities. Please oppose 420 [S.B. 420].

I have submitted my written letter in opposition ([Exhibit S](#)).

Ms. KNAAK:

I live here in Incline Village two blocks from Burnt Cedar Beach, and I am shocked to hear that the businesses want this. Most of the businesses I have talked to, they do not even know about it. The other thing you need to know is that for businesses in this community, it is really hard to survive. That tax would be passed on; that would be something they would have to come up with. And also, the customers, it would be passed on to the customers, us, the residents, and everything is more expensive here in Tahoe already. That is going to even make it more expensive. Not everyone here is rich. There are actually a lot of retired people who live here, and most of them live on fixed incomes.

Under section 15, a bond can be issued. Is that one that is going to be applied to our taxes? Because I already pay on two bonds, a school bond and a Washoe County bond, and I pay over \$2,000 every year in property taxes. The part where it says bonds, I pay over \$2,000 a year for that section alone. So, the TRPA needs to spend their money cleaning up the lake, and they need to stop the government overreach. One other thing I want to bring up is they want to bring more people into the community. Well, there's a little problem with that—we have been compared to Lahaina. So, if we had a fire here, chances of getting out alive are very slight. The current evacuation plans, they actually do not even include visitors. So, I do not know how we are going to get out alive. Please vote no on this. Stop this horrible bill.

ANN NICHOLS:

I am 54 years a resident and a Nevada-California real estate broker. [I] owned homes in Washoe County and am very familiar with how the TBID [tourism business district] on the California side has worked. It is run by the tourism groups, and they are in charge of \$24 million a year. We have no real—they have some committees—influence on where it goes. We knew in the beginning how much the percentage was going to be, how long it was going to be for. You know, there's no detail here. This is like an open checkbook. It is just so far from being ready to move forward. I do not know—is it going to be unprofessional? This is a financial institution. This is kind of crazy, actually. So, I am hoping that you will not press this forward. It needs a lot more time.

MS. IVANOFF:

For the second time I would say ditto, but because it is getting late, please vote no on this bill.

STEVEN DOLAN (Friends of Third Creek):

I am a 32-year resident of North Shore Lake Tahoe. On behalf of the Friends of Third Creek on the North Shore as an environmental group, Chair, thank you for inviting us to speak here, committee as well. Excuse the mixed metaphor related to April, but the bill number 420 [S.B. 420] actually seems to be perfect for the TRPA asking you to smoke the Kool-Aid. Sorry, but I had to. Maybe it will wake us up.

In their ever-reaching effort to develop Lake Tahoe's pristine and inviting environment, TRPA will destroy this alpine lake and its appeal to travelers. Already, internationally, it is being touted as a place not to go because it's being destroyed by overdevelopment. Do not listen to the rationale that new business development districts will stay within their predetermined statute, for they will not help Lake Tahoe. Allowing TRPA to supersede local municipalities and GIDs [general improvement districts] will further enhance their power to ignore those local communities that have a better understanding of their developmental limits, safety requirements like evacuation and their own local character, which is worth preserving.

The Agency has already influenced Washoe County to change the business districts in Incline Village. That effort was so undesirable, the condo units that they used to force this exception to the rules to the business corridor caused the developer to sell the whole concept as a failure. Tahoe Regional Planning

Agency should not be in the business of transforming local municipalities. Please do not fall for this “California has it” excuse as well because that is one of the ways they bring things into California first and then say for lake continuity, we want to have this in Nevada.

JOHN EPPOLITO:

[Here’s] an update to the story I told this committee about a month ago regarding that area of land at Incline that local residents designated as low-income, moderate-income and employee housing. Thanks to Washoe County and blessed by the TRPA, the zoning in the entire area was changed to allow multimillion-dollar condos. The developer of the parcel I mentioned last time, 947 Tahoe Boulevard, has put that land, the plans and the TRPA approvals up for sale for \$11 million. That's what they are really up to.

When TRPA’s updated regional plan was voted on last year, the highest-ranking elected member on TRPA’s governing board, Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar, voted against the plan and said something like, “The TRPA needs to start listening to the residents of Lake Tahoe.” The TRPA has lost their way, and with S.B. 420 the TRPA will further alienate residents. The last three summers have seen the most traffic in the Tahoe Basin since we moved there 30 years ago. On the North Shore for eight weeks during the summer and two weeks over the holidays, we can be stuck in gridlock many times per day.

Eleven days ago, the RGJ [*Reno Gazette-Journal*] published an article titled, “It will not be survivable: Lake Tahoe could be a death trap during major wildfires.” Instead of focusing on protecting Lake Tahoe and getting us out of the basin when there’s a wildfire, the TRPA is trying to gain more control over the Tahoe Basin via S.B. 420 and implement things that make absolutely no sense—like bringing even more people into the basin during fire season. The TRPA should stick to their original charter, which was to “protect Lake Tahoe.” Please do not give them any more power.

SCOTT TIECHE:

[As a] Nevada property owner, 45-year Tahoe resident, I am opposed to S.B. 420. I have to be kind of short. I only found out about this a couple of days ago, and haven't had time to prepare. Most of the people I talk to don't know a thing about this. In short, this smacks of taxation without representation; BIDs are sold as tourists paying their fair share. In reality, us locals will pay every day. The company Civitas has a checkered reputation. Do some research.

They've been litigated for misrepresentation and lack of transparency. For Civitas, being sued is just part of doing business because they are going to be more than compensated with their slice of the cake. The TRPA is in favor. Why? Because the TRPA just promotes more and more these days. No more conservation. This is just another power grab in these unprecedented times. Nevada promotes itself as tax-friendly. Is this sneaking around the popular vote friendly? Oppose this. Do the research, and you will know you did the right thing. As the billboard says, "Just because California does it does not mean Nevada has to."

CHAIR FLORES:

There is a letter in support ([Exhibit T](#)) from the League to Save Lake Tahoe and letters in opposition from Doug Flaherty ([Exhibit U](#)), Chris DePuy ([Exhibit V](#)), Ellie Waller ([Exhibit W](#)), Fred Voltz ([Exhibit X](#)) and Richard Miner ([Exhibit Y](#)).

SENATOR DALY:

There were a few remarks that are slightly inaccurate on some of the stuff. First of all, it is not a tax, and it is businesses that are going to self-assess. Many of the details that the gentleman was talking about: how come, how come this, that and the other thing are all going to be in the district management plan. The businesses are not going to tax themselves, if you will or assess themselves, 20 percent. It is going to be 1 percent or 2 percent, a couple of different businesses. It is just [that] people want to throw TRPA under the bus. They got nothing to do with the bill. They're not involved. It is the businesses that are going to set it up. There'll be an association of employers that oversee it. County has oversight on what they do and what they are allowed to do.

MR. CHAPMAN:

We have seen BIDs work. We have seen them work close to us in Tahoe. We have seen them work in other states around the Union. Utah had a recent one that just happened, as have Wyoming and Colorado. We are asking Nevada for the ability to replicate the success of these TBIDs on the Nevada side. I am committed to working with all the commenters you heard from today to craft a stronger bill and to bring this to fruition for our region.

SENATOR KRASNER:

Some of the comments that callers were saying, is this assessment only on the businesses in the business improvement district, or are the homeowners going to be paying it? One of the callers said that.

SENATOR DALY:
Businesses, and it is self-assessed.

CHAIR FLORES:
We'll go ahead and close out the hearing ...

SENATOR DALY:
In some of the things that we heard about when they were all the things with TRPA. People have issues with TRPA. What I did not hear was anybody coming up with an idea that is going to address the traffic issue. I did hear a lot of people that say I am at the lake this many years and all of you people coming up to visit my lake or invading my space—That is just not the way the world is going to work. We have to improve the traffic; we have to improve transit. We have to have as the one caller said, we are all in favor of traffic, and we want it to be foot traffic. I want to get that out there again.

This will improve, or at least it is an opportunity to improve. If we do not try it, we are stuck with nothing, which is not an option in my view.

SENATOR FLORES:
We'll go ahead and close out the hearing on S.B. 420 and open up for public comment.

MS. IVANOFF:
I wanted to express my big disappointment because every bill that I ever listen, you usually give equal opportunity time for both opposition and support. However, for S.B. 156, everybody in support was heard, but that opportunity was not given for the opposition. And in many cases, I see that the people are not treated equally when we are giving opinions. I understand people went through a nightmare. But in other cases, our side is not given that chance and we also go through nightmares. And also, it was not acknowledged that 97 percent on your NELIS site is in opposition of the bill. So, it sounded like you have a lot of support, but you also have a lot of opposition that I do not believe was acknowledged, and I do not believe it was fair. And I would hope that from now on you would treat us more fairly and give equal time to everybody. And one of the reasons we are running so late is because you allow them to speak a lot more than they should have.

CHAIR FLORES:

I am going to cut you off. Our Vice Chair would cut off speakers consistently on opposition and support. Multiple times he told them you have two minutes, and he would cut them off. In addition, those 30 minutes we allocated to both sides—the opposition did not use the full breadth of the 30 minutes. Nobody cut them off. You just did not have enough people in opposition to fill up 30 minutes. That's not the Vice Chair's fault. He did a tremendous job, ma'am. And so, we are not going to allow you to attack the Vice Chair. With that, we are going to go to the next speaker.

Ms. NICHOLS:

I know we are all exhausted. It has been a long day, but I just wanted to say TART Connect is really a free Uber, and we are just gathering all the financials on it right now. It is about \$17 per ride. And it is just a terrible waste of money: \$6 million to \$13 million a year. I just wanted to point that out and just say that in for the BID, the California side is being run by the big resorts by committee. And it is tourism people and big resorts, and these little business owners are at their mercy.

Ms. TSIGDINOS:

I know we are all exhausted. I just wanted to address Senator Krasner's question about how this affects the local community. Let me give you a story. Last October, friends from the East Coast came our way. They wanted to thank us for hosting them in our house and took us out to dinner locally. We booked a table at a locally owned and operated restaurant. It is a 35-year-old business, wonderful meal, excellent service in Kings Beach, California.

Our friend grabbed the bill and upon reviewing the charges, he saw a strange line called BID. Puzzled, he asked what the extra fee for the total cost of the meal charge was. The wait staff apologized and said it was a tourism tax. But we are locals, he said. He noted many of their longtime local diners have the same experience. So, this extra charge that locals did not vote on and do not control is what S.B. 420 will do for the Nevada side of Tahoe. Those of us who live and patronize the businesses in our communities will pay this fee. We do not know how much it is. Obviously, there's a lot still being devised, but this is not a fair representation of what this particular new payment scheme is going to look like.

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CHAIR FLORES:

There being no further business, this meeting is adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Diane Rea,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Edgar Flores, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 297	C	9	Senator Edgar Flores	Julie Kemp Support Testimony
S.B. 297	D	9	Senator Edgar Flores	Ann Sweder Opposition Letter
S.B. 156	E	11	Senator Edgar Flores	Conceptual Amendment
S.B. 156	F	14	Madeline Krieger	Presentation for Senator Edgar Flores
S.B. 156	G	14	Madeline Krieger	Testimony
S.B. 156	H	39	Martha Duran	Support Testimony in Spanish and English
S.B. 156	I	39	Juanita Morales	Support Testimony in Spanish and English
S.B. 156	J	48	Senator Edgar Flores	Lee D. McAllister / Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Support Letter
S.B. 156	K	48	Senator Edgar Flores	Sydney Mitchell Support Letter
S.B. 156	L	48	Senator Edgar Flores	Bruce Parks Opposition Letter
S.B. 156	M	48	Senator Edgar Flores	Ann Sweder Opposition Letter
S.B. 449	N	49	Kenneth Hawkes	Clark County Proposed Amendment

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S.B. 449	O	53	Doug Roberts	Court Complaint
S.B. 420	P	55	Senator Skip Daly	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 420	Q	56	Andrew Chapman / Travel North Tahoe Nevada	Presentation
S.B. 420	R	56	Tahoe Basin Businesses and Residents	45 Support Letters
S.B. 420	S	62	Pamela Tsigdinos	Letter in Opposition
S.B. 420	T	64	Senator Edgar Flores	The League to Save Lake Tahoe Support Letter
S.B. 420	U	65	Senator Edgar Flores	Doug Flaherty Opposition Letter
S.B. 420	V	65	Senator Edgar Flores	Chris DePuy Opposition Letter
S.B. 420	W	65	Senator Edgar Flores	Ellie Waller Opposition Letter
S.B. 420	X	65	Senator Edgar Flores	Fred Voltz Opposition Letter
S.B. 420	Y	65	Senator Edgar Flores	Richard Miner Public Opposition Letter