MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Eighty-third Session
May 6, 2025

The Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair James Ohrenschall at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 9 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 James Ohrenschall, Chair
Senator Skip Daly, Vice Chair
Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro
Senator Lisa Krasner
Senator John C. Steinbeck

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Gregory Hafen II, Assembly District No. 36
Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui, Assembly District No. 41
Assemblymember Steve Yeager, Assembly District No. 9

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pepper Sturm, Committee Policy Analyst
Connie Summers, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Emily Persaud-Zamora, Executive Director, Silver State Voices
Kaylah Maese, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada
Nick Shepack, Fines and Fees Justice Center
Izack Tenorio, Campaign Legal Center
Noé Orosco, Make the Road Nevada
Jenna Vella, Battle Born Progress
Oscar Williams

Ellen Gifford
Priscella Gomez, Silver State Voices; Let Nevadans Vote Coalition
Anahit Baghshetsyan, Nevada Policy Research Institute
Chanel Cassanello, All Voting is Local
William Moore, Nevada Civic Engagement Director, Mi Familia en Acción
Lynn Chapman, Nevada Families for Freedom
Kimberly Fergus
Jim DeGraffenreid, Nevada Republican Party
Cynthia Perine
Jessica Munger, Silver State Equality
Trystin St. Denis, Nevada Conservation League
Pauline Lee, President, Nevada Republican Club
Dora Martinez, Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition
Mathilda Miller, Native Voters Alliance Nevada
Eric Jeng, Executive Director, One APIA Nevada
Ashley Dodson, NAACP Las Vegas #1111
Jane B. Davis

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
I want to advise that Vice Chair Daly and I are presenting bills in the Assembly Legislative Operations and Elections Committee, so we will be passing the gavel back and forth or short a member.

We're very fortunate to have our Assembly Majority Leader with us today. I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill (A.B.) 477.

ASSEMBLY BILL 477: Revises provisions relating to the counting of incarcerated persons for purposes of the apportionment of the population for certain election districts. (BDR 16-1134)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER SANDRA JAUREGUI (Assembly District No. 41):
I am presenting A.B. 477 along with my copresenter, Emily Persaud-Zamora from Silver State Voices. We also have Aleks Kajstura from Prison Policy Initiative with us on Zoom to help answer questions.

Assembly Bill 477 is a cleanup bill to A.B. No. 450 of the 80th Session. This bill is necessary in order to help Nevada comply with the 2019 state law. In 2019, Nevada took steps to address the issue of prison gerrymandering. Prison gerrymandering is the act of counting incarcerated persons as residents of an

area where the prison is located that gives inflated representation to that community. In 2019, we presented A.B. No. 450 of the 80th Session that changed the law to make sure that incarcerated persons would be counted at their last known place of residence instead of at the prison solely for the purpose of census counting to redraw redistricting lines. All we are trying to do is make sure that incarcerated persons are counted in the areas where they will return once they leave prison. This allows us to accurately draw our Legislative, Congressional and Board of Regents Districts. This is about getting accurate numbers for the next redistricting.

EMILY PERSAUD-ZAMORA (Silver State Voices):
As Assemblymember Jauregui explained, this has been quite a journey. We started working on this bill in 2019 in the form of A.B. No. 450 of the 80th Session. So why exactly are we here today? As folks may know, the census happens every ten years. It's the only survey that the United States government does require to occur every ten years. The next one will be in 2030. Part of the census goal is to ensure we are counting the number of all people living within the United States of America.

The federal government compiles and analyzes the census data and then provides it to the states. From there, the states are responsible for using census data for redistricting. For viewers who may not be aware, in Nevada, the redistricting process does happen via the Legislature. Anyone can create maps and provide feedback; and ultimately, the Nevada Legislators will vote for new maps. If you all are here in 2031, you will be part of that process.

It is during the redistricting process that you may have heard of the term gerrymandering. There are a variety of different types of gerrymandering, but for definition, gerrymandering is the intentional manipulation of maps to create an advantage for a particular candidate, party or groups of people. When A.B. No. 450 of the 80th Session passed, one of the things we saw during the redistricting process is we received a lot of feedback around issues in being able to collect the data in an appropriate manner. The Interim Redistricting Committee [Committee to Conduct an Investigation into Matters Relating to Reapportionment and Redistricting in Nevada] held a meeting on October 27, 2021, and LCB [Legislative Counsel Bureau] staff members, DOC [Department of Corrections] and the State Demographer provided updates on the status of the reallocation of inmates pursuant to A.B. No. 450 of the

80th Session. They provided lots of data. I will provide all of that with my testimony so folks will have that for their reference.

The big takeaways that were discussed during this meeting were issues with data quality, such as incomplete addresses; errors; typos; incompatible addresses, such as P.O. boxes; or formatting issues. There was also a lack of clarity and guidance around which types of addresses to use for the redistricting process and how allocation of unallocated inmates should actually occur.

At this particular meeting, we learned that only 51.5 percent of inmates were reallocated. Clearly, not what we ideally would like. We would like to get as close to 100 percent as possible. After this, there was a lot of work done with the Governor's Office and DOC at the time, and we were able to get closer to 70 percent of collection and information but hoping that with the passage of A.B. 477 we can get to a better place.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAUREGUI:
Before we go to questions, I did just want to note that our Nevada Constitution actually states that for the purposes of voting, people in prisons should be counted as residents of their hometowns. So, we are just trying to align with what our constitution currently states.

KAYLAH MAESE (American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada):
The ACLU of Nevada supports A.B. 477, and we urge the committee to support as well.

NICK SHEPACK (Fines and Fees Justice Center):
We don't get to often testify on elections bills, so I am very happy to be here today. The people we represent are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, both through incarceration and once they are released on parole. Ensuring they have accurate representation ensures that laws are crafted to protect them and ensure their success and promote community safety. For those reasons, we strongly support this bill.

IZACK TENORIO (Campaign Legal Center):
We support A.B. 477, a bill that would allow Nevada to fully implement the law it passed in 2019 with the intention to end prison gerrymandering. Prison gerrymandering distorts the democratic process by counting incarcerated individuals where they are imprisoned rather than their legal residency for the

purpose of redistricting. During the 2020 registration cycle, Nevada only reallocated about 65 percent of people in the state prison back to their home communities. The reforms in this bill should ensure an improved process during the next redistricting cycle.

This bill clarifies the duty of the Department of Corrections to collect an inmate's last known residential address and relevant data, provides guidance when this data needs to be shared with the State Demographer and requires unique identifiers to be used. It crucially lays out the procedures for the State Demographer to follow for people incarcerated in Nevada who do not have a last known address or whose last known address is outside of the State. Proper implementation is vital for the effectiveness of this law and policy, and we applaud the committee for tackling this issue and considering reforms. We'd like to thank the Assembly Majority Leader Jauregui and Executive Director Zamora for this great legislation.

NOÉ OROSCO (Make the Road Nevada):
In Nevada, the redistricting process normally takes place during the legislative process just like the presenters had mentioned, but because of the pandemic, there was a delay in providing the 2020 census redistricting data summary files which are also known as the PL94-171 files. Because of that, there was a special legislative session because the information was provided in August 2021. So when we are thinking about the redistricting process, we should be thinking about it throughout the 120 days, not during a special legislative session.

Make the Road Nevada and the Nevadans Count Coalition advocated for accurately reallocating incarcerated individuals to their home communities. As the sponsor indicated, there was a lack of clarity and guidance in the data, but there was also a gap between the State Demographer and the Department of Corrections as to who was supposed to be providing certain information or collecting that information. Initially, the State was able to reallocate about 51 percent of incarcerated individuals. Nationally, with states that have something very similar, we saw that it was closer to 60 percent. As the person who spoke just before me indicated, it was closer to 65 percent when we were able to reallocate an additional 1,000 individuals just because of the advocacy that the Nevadans Count Coalition had done.

Incarcerated individuals remain residents of their home districts, and those who are citizens have the right to vote restored upon release. These individuals still deserve to be represented in the communities where they belong, and their votes should go toward improving the places where their loved ones live and where they are going to be rebuilding their lives. This is why we support A.B. 477, and we urge you to support this bill.

JENNA VELLA (Battle Born Progress):
I am here today to express my strong support for A.B. 477. Right now, people in prison are counted as residents of where they are incarcerated, not where they are actually from. This shifts political power away from their home communities, many of which are already underrepresented. Assembly Bill 477 fixes this by making sure people are counted based on their last known address before incarceration. That's a simple and fair change that makes sure redistricting reflects real communities, not prison populations. This bill is about fairness and accurate representation. I urge you to support A.B. 477.

OSCAR WILLIAMS:
I am in opposition to A.B. 477. I would like to start with a question. Do you guys know how many noncitizens are currently in prison? I do not think the federal government knows. But if you know, that would be important because this bill does not give any credence to noncitizens. And if they are in our jails, they may have a chance to vote, and certainly they could be counted in the census. And ultimately, the goal of this bill is to skew the vote, skew the census.

In addition, this bill is a nightmare to administer. For example, we have prisoners from out of state in our jails. Will they be getting a Nevada ballot, or will we be processing a ballot from their home state for them? I don't think this bill even addresses that. Will other states reciprocate in regard to voting? Will they be counted in the census for our State? I don't know. And of course, this bill has a huge unfunded mandate. There are a lot of reasons to oppose A.B. 477. I urge you to vote no on this.

ELLEN GIFFORD:
In Nevada statute, Title 32, Revenue and Taxation, of NRS [*Nevada Revised Statutes*] 360.283 mandates that the Department of Taxation shall employ a demographer to assist in the determination of population and to cooperate with the federal government in the conduct of each decennial census as it relates to

the State. Current law states that the State Demographer shall revise the population counts by counting every inmate who was a resident of the State before incarceration. Section 2 of this bill changes the duties of the State Demographer from not counting inmates who did not have an address in our State before incarceration to counting inmates who did not have an address in our State before incarceration. This compromises the result of the count.

The question that must be answered is has this bill been developed in cooperation with the Department of Taxation which employs the State Demographer and is responsible to the federal government which makes important decisions that impact the welfare of Nevadans upon the results of this count with the Governor who must certify this count? Without their involvement in the content of this bill, it should go no further.

MS. PERSAUD-ZAMORA:
I just wanted to close by addressing a couple of things based on some of the testimony. I did want to indicate that this bill, A.B. 477, does not have anything to do with the ability to cast a ballot or somebody's right to vote. It is just a matter of representation. I wanted to clarify that. So there is nothing about ballots, receiving ballots or anything like that.

I also did want to mention that with the redistricting process, it is about every person who lives in this State, regardless of their citizenship status, as long as they are a resident. That is statute. I just wanted to make sure that that was on the record.

At Silver State Voices, part of our work involves census and redistricting. We believe that census and redistricting are not only an important piece of our State's democratic process but also send a strong message about who is included in our society. Once a decade, the census gives us a snapshot of who we are as a state and as a country. We strongly believe that incarcerated individuals are part of our communities; and if we want a truly representative democracy, our policies should reflect that accordingly. This bill did pass unanimously in the Assembly, so we are hoping for the same in the Senate.

SENATOR STEINBECK:
How do you account for unhoused as far as the last known location?

MS. PERSAUD-ZAMORA:
That's a wonderful question. Honestly, it's my opinion there isn't a perfect formula. I think the State does as much as possible when it comes to census and redistricting. There are specific teams that the State does create to ensure that they are going within many of the unhoused communities to be able to count them during the census, to collect that information so that it is used during the redistricting process. It's been the best process that I have witnessed among many other states. Is it a perfect process? I don't think it is perfect because with the unhoused community being transient, it is hard to capture everyone. But that is the current process within Nevada.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
I will now close the hearing on A.B. 477 and move to the work session on A.B. 306.

ASSEMBLY BILL 306 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to elections. (BDR 24-569)

I will remind everyone that the work session is the time for the committee to act on bills. We will not be taking further testimony or rehearing the bill. However, as chair, I may at times ask one of the interested parties to come forward to answer a question or clarify an issue.

PEPPER STURM (Committee Policy Analyst):
As a reminder as nonpartisan staff, I cannot advocate for or against any measure. The Chair just asked me to review the work session document (Exhibit C).

Assembly Bill 306 was sponsored by Assemblymember Yeager and a number of others. We heard the bill on April 29 this year. It requires county clerks in certain counties for the period beginning the day after the last day of early voting and ending the day before Election Day to establish a certain number of mail ballot drop box locations that must be open for at least seven hours a day. The bill additionally requires ballot drop boxes to be monitored at all times when made available for use and secured during any period when not available for use. The Secretary of State must adopt regulations to establish requirements for monitoring and securing ballot drop boxes. There were no amendments proposed for this measure.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
I would accept a motion to do pass on Assembly Bill 306.

SENATOR DALY MOVED TO DO PASS A.B. 306.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO SECONDED THE MOTION.

SENATOR STEINBECK:
I will be voting no but reserve my right to change my vote on the floor.

THE MOTION CARRIED. (SENATORS KRASNER AND STEINBECK VOTED NO.)

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CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
I will now open the hearing on A.B. 148.

ASSEMBLY BILL 148 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to elections. (BDR 24-770)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GREGORY HAFEN II (Assembly District No. 36):
With me today I have my intern, Elijah Wion, who has put together this graphic presentation (Exhibit D) for us, using the color purple intentionally. I will get to that briefly. I am pleased to introduce A.B. 148, which revises the deadlines for the distribution of sample ballots and mail ballots.

As you know, sample ballots are sent out to all registered voters and contain important information such as voting locations, descriptions of ballot measures, candidates as they will appear on the ballots, etc. The current law requires the city and county clerks to distribute the sample ballots before the period for early voting, which is on the third Saturday proceeding the election, which is the seventeenth [October 17] for the 2026 general election. This deadline obviously is sufficient for people to get their sample vote before going to early voting or voting on Election Day. However, those wishing to vote by mail may not receive their sample ballot before their mail ballot.

This came to my attention in September before the last general election when I was getting phone calls and text messages from constituents who were

confused because their mail ballot showed up in their mail in September, and they thought it was their sample ballot. Some of them threw it away because they just thought it was a sample and didn't need it, but it was their actual mail ballot. So, when they wanted to vote, they no longer had their ballots.

Today, we're here to ensure that sample ballots get to people before their mail ballots get to their mailbox just like we've been doing with early voting and Election Day. Assembly Bill 148 not only addresses the timeline for distributing sample ballots, it also establishes a clear time frame to distribute mail ballots, which was Amendment No. 101 from the Speaker.

Existing law was kind of ambiguous about when the mail ballots must be distributed and only specified they must be distributed no later than 20 days before an election. Under current law, clerks could technically distribute the general mail ballots in June right after the primary, which clearly people would lose and not be able to utilize or they could start voting in June right after the primary. With such an open-ended time frame, voters are left wondering when they will receive their mail ballots. Assembly Bill 148 prescribes a new time frame for distributing the mail ballots to provide clarity to voters and prevent overlap with the distribution of the ballots.

Assembly Bill 148 revises the deadline for distributing the mail ballots from not later than 20 days before the election to instead on or after the fifth Monday before the election—which [according to] the calendar, Exhibit D, would be October 5, the earliest that the mail ballots could be sent out, but not later than the fourth Monday before the election which, [according to] the calendar, would be October 12. So, it makes it a week-long window for the mail ballots to go out. The other portion of the bill would just say that sample ballots have to be mailed out before the fourth so that it ensures that people are getting their sample ballots before they receive their actual mail ballots to end some of the confusion that we saw last [time] and to avoid the situation where the mail ballots could be sent out in June. I wanted to clarify that my clerk was superefficient by getting our ballots out in September. I have to give her massive kudos. She didn't break the law or anything like that. She was just being extremely efficient getting them out as soon as she physically could get them done. However, it did cause a lot of confusion with our constituents.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
The visual [in Exhibit D] is fantastic. It really helps us to understand the issue. I think the bill is more timely now because I have heard about possible cuts to the U.S. Postal Service, and I think trying to get these ballots out earlier is now even more important.

PRISCELLA GOMEZ (Silver State Voices; Let Nevadans Vote Coalition):
I am here to testify in support of A.B. 148 on behalf of Silver State Voices and Let Nevadans Vote Coalition. We view A.B. 148 as a meaningful step forward in reducing confusion around the vote-by-mail process. In the 2024 general election, almost 45 percent of Nevada voters used mail to cast their ballots. Unfortunately, several counties experienced delays in sending out voter sample ballots that created confusion surrounding which ballots were the official ballot.

As an organization that works on voter education and get-out-the-vote efforts, we frequently hear from voters who are unsure of when they will receive their sample and mail ballots. Assembly Bill 148 would provide clarity by setting consistent expectations for when official election materials will arrive from the county registrars. This benefits all voters, including those who choose to vote in person who often bring their sample ballots to the polls as reference. Giving Nevada voters ample time to review their sample ballots allows them to make informed decisions before voting.

We thank Assemblymember Hafen and Speaker Yeager for bringing this piece of legislation forward, and we urge the committee to support A.B. 148.

MS. MAESE:
As partners of the Let Nevadans Vote Coalition, we [ACLU of Nevada] support A.B. 148 and urge the committee to support the bill as well.

MR. TENORIO:
We [Campaign Legal Center] support A.B. 148 to ensure that voters timely receive their sample ballots in advance of the arrival for the mail ballots. This simple, sensible policy not only provides voters with more time to research candidates and issues, it also helps to minimize any confusion that voters may face if their materials arrive simultaneously to each other or out of order.

Under current law, the clerks are only mandated to send sample ballots to registered voters before early voting begins. Assembly Bill 148 will peg the

distribution of sample ballots to occur before the deadline for sending out mail ballots and shift up the mail ballot deadline. Combined, this approach will facilitate more informed decision-making on the part of voters and enable them to align their votes with their values when they receive their official mail ballots. We thank Minority Leader Hafen and Speaker Yeager for this piece of legislation. We urge the committee to vote yes.

MR. OROSCO:
Voting by mail is a very popular and accessible way for eligible voters to participate in elections. In the 2024 general election, nearly 45 percent of Nevada voters opted to cast their ballot by mail, demonstrating the widespread reliance on this method. Although voting by mail is a popular method, many people still have difficulties with it because of the timing of when they receive the election materials. It is important to recognize that not all voters who received the mail ballot end up voting by mail. Some end up choosing to vote at a polling place, but they still bring their sample ballots with them as a reference.

By requiring the counties to send the sample ballots before mailing the official ballots, voters have the opportunity to review and make informed decisions based on the candidates and ballot measures before they receive the official ballot.

ANAHIT BAGHSHETSYAN (Nevada Policy Research Institute):
Today, Nevada Policy comes in strong support of Assembly Bill 148. It is a commonsense, stronger form that we heard all about today. I would like to highlight that 48 percent of voters in Nevada voted by mail for the 2020 election, and the number grew to 51 percent in 2022. And as we heard just mentioned, 44.99 percent of voters voted by mail. Clearly, sample ballots are resources that older voters heavily rely on while making decisions and also while understanding the election process. The proper sequencing of all the ballot materials and the proper delivery will ensure that all voters have equal access to information and can make informed decisions. For those reasons, we urge the committee to support this piece of legislation.

CHANEL CASSANELLO (All Voting is Local):
I am here in support of A.B. 148, a commonsense bill that addresses a simple but important issue—the timing of when voters receive their election materials. Voters should receive their sample ballots before their mail ballots and their mail ballots before early voting begins. If a voter receives their sample ballot well

after their mail ballot has arrived, it leads to confusion, adds an unnecessary cost to the system without providing any real benefit to the voter and leads to the perception that the sample ballot is useless despite being a great resource for voters. Sample ballots arriving late undermine the goal of helping voters make well-informed decisions. They are essential tools that help voters prepare and make a plan to vote. They contain important information that voters rely on such as key dates, voter registration information, early voting and Election Day polling sites, drop-off locations, candidates and ballot questions.

In addition, A.B. 148 ensures that voters are sent their official mail ballots between the fifth and fourth Monday before early voting begins. By standardizing this time frame, it benefits both voters and county election officials and optimizes the opportunity to vote early. Voters will have the materials they need when they need them to make a decision on how to cast their ballots with confidence. This measure offers a practical solution, ensuring voters have the tools to research issues and candidates and be prepared to vote by the method they so choose. For these reasons, I urge you to support A.B. 148.

WILLIAM MOORE (Nevada Civic Engagement Director, Mi Familia en Acción):
I am here to testify in support of A.B. 148. Mi Familia en Acción is a civic engagement organization where we advocate for issues that impact Latino and working class communities. We support A.B. 148 because it is a logical policy that can help turn potential voters into consistent voters.

We ran a nonpartisan get-out-the-vote program in Las Vegas last year; and while in the community, we helped answer many questions about the voting process, and folks even asked us about the sample ballot. We know our community here in Nevada has been built by people who come from a variety of backgrounds; and by ensuring voters are sent sample ballots before mail-in ballots, A.B. 148 will help more of us have the time and information that is needed to make an informed decision at the polls.

Nevada is a beautifully diverse community, and bills like A.B. 148 will promote voter participation among voters who have historically faced voting barriers. At Mi Familia en Acción, we strongly believe that more participation and confidence can inspire continued progress. Thank you Assemblymember Hafen and Speaker Yeager for sponsoring this bill. We recommend that the committee support A.B. 148.

LYNN CHAPMAN (Nevada Families for Freedom):
Thank you for putting the amendment in that puts the dates that the sample ballots need to be put in the mail. It might seem like a small change, but it is a big help with people filling out their ballots without messing up their actual mail-in ballots. I live in Washoe County, and I received my sample ballot after early voting had begun and had been going for a while, but I received my actual mail-in ballot before I received my sample ballot. I was asked by a number of people what was going on and if their ballot was their sample ballot, and everybody was very confused. I was able to help a lot of people figure everything out. This bill looks to be the simple solution to the problem. It's a great bill so, please vote yes on A.B. 148.

KIMBERLY FERGUS:
I rise in strong support of Assembly Bill 148 with the smart, proactive updates. I echo everything everybody else has testified on. Please support this bill.

JIM DEGRAFFENREID (Nevada Republican Party):
I'm here today on behalf of the Nevada Republican Party in support of A.B. 148. Thank you, Minority Leader Hafen and Speaker Yeager, for bringing this bill forward. This is a commonsense adjustment to the election calendar to ensure the sample ballots arrive prior to actual ballots. The Nevada Republican Party election office was flooded with calls and questions last cycle over mail ballots arriving before sample ballots. We're pleased to see bipartisan cooperation and support to make sure this is resolved before the next election. We support A.B. 148 and urge the committee to pass this bill which had unanimous support in the Assembly.

CYNTHIA PERINE:
I support this bill. It is common sense.

JESSICA MUNGER (Silver State Equality):
Silver State Equality is in support of A.B. 148.

TRYSTIN ST. DENIS (Nevada Conservation League):
We protect Nevada's environment and uphold the values of Nevadans while doing so. We believe the health of our planet and the health of our democracy are linked. This will ensure that voters have their sample ballots ahead of time so they can be well-informed each election cycle. For these reasons, we urge your support.

MS. GIFFORD:
I strongly support this bill.

PAULINE LEE (President, Nevada Republican Club):
I'd like to thank Assembly Minority Leader Hafen and Speaker Yeager for this bill. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of A.B. 148, which concerns the deadline for the county clerks to send out mail ballots to voters. This bill further sets a deadline for the county clerks to distribute sample ballots before the deadline to send out mail ballots. This bill is practical, logical and will allow voters to have sufficient time to review their sample ballots. They will have the time to read all of the arguments in favor of and against various statewide questions and propositions. This is a good nonpartisan bill that will allow more time for voters to be engaged. This bill will help voters to be more informed and gain a deeper understanding of what they are being requested to vote on. So please pass this bill and make it into law.

DORA MARTINEZ (Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition):
And we thank Majority Leader Hafen and Speaker Yeager and the minority for sponsoring A.B. 148. This bill is a dream come true for people who are disabled in this State because it will give us time to do research and be well-informed, to go out to vote and know who we are voting for.

MATHILDA MILLER (Native Voters Alliance Nevada):
Native Voters Alliance Nevada is in strong support of Assembly Bill 148, and we are grateful for this bipartisan, commonsense solution. In my household, voting is a shared tradition. When our sample ballots arrive, we sit down as a family to walk through the issues together and make sure that everyone understands what's at stake. In fact, my dad—he's 70 now—reads the sample ballot cover to cover the morning after it arrives so by the time his mail ballot actually shows up, he's ready; and that's exactly what this bill supports. It gives voters time to prepare. Voting should be clear, successful and informed, not rushed or confusing. When voters have the tools and time to understand the ballot, turnout improves, trust in the system improves and democracy delivers for all of us. We urge your support.

ERIC JENG (Executive Director, One APIA Nevada):
We advocate for the fast-growing Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community [and we] are in full support of A.B. 148. As someone who has translated the sample ballot and voting materials cover to cover, it will

tremendously help the work we are doing for language access and being able to utilize community volunteers, leaders and advocates to be able to translate these materials to help our community to be more involved. I want to thank the sponsors for this bill. We are here to bring the community together and hopefully make democracy more accessible.

ASHLEY DODSON (NAACP Las Vegas #1111):
We are here in support of A.B. 148, which strengthens election accessibility and transparency by requiring that all active registered voters receive sample ballots and polling location notices before the mail ballot distribution deadline. This bill addresses issues of delayed information and confusion, particularly in underserved communities, and ensures voters are better equipped to participate in the democratic process. Assembly Bill 148 promotes equity, informed voting and increased civic engagement. We urge swift passage.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
We will now close the hearing on A.B. 148 and open the hearing on A.B. 490.

ASSEMBLY BILL 490 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to the venue for certain proceedings. (BDR 24-870)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER STEVE YEAGER (Assembly District No. 9):
It is an honor to present Assembly Bill 490 in its first reprint to you this afternoon. Assembly Bill 490 is about public access to one of our State's most important types of court cases: initiative petitions.

Under existing law, the First Judicial District here in Carson City has exclusive jurisdiction over initiative petition cases. That means these cases cannot, by law, be heard anywhere else in the State. I suspect the First Judicial District Court was given exclusive jurisdiction because it is a court located here in Carson City, Nevada's capital. While exclusive jurisdiction might have made sense when the statute was originally enacted, it doesn't make sense in our modern world.

Unfortunately, many judicial districts in Nevada, including Carson City, have not modernized to a point where the public has meaningful access to what is happening in those courts. This means that documents are not easily available nor are the hearings easily accessible. For instance, there is no online access to documents, greatly slowing down the process of getting documents from these

courts. You actually have to travel to the court to request a document in person. There is no online access to hearings, meaning neither the press nor the public can watch proceedings without traveling to the courthouse and watching them live and in person. This leaves Nevadans in the dark about what is happening in these cases. The result of this is that media and the public are left in the dark about these cases, which again are among some of the most important cases that we have happening in our State.

According to Tabitha Mueller, a politics reporter at *The Nevada Independent*, "accessing court information quickly and efficiently is essential for informing the public. The current setup often results in delays, hindering our ability to provide timely and accurate reporting." Katelyn Newberg, a reporter at the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* sat on a panel on the issue that wider online access would ensure court documents aren't limited to just a handful of people who learn over time how to navigate the system and learn the right person in time to call a court. "Having an open court system lets us follow these cases through the system, continue to report on them and give people access to information, which really is a basic foundation of both journalism and our democracy as a whole."

In addition, when courts have fewer than five judges, there aren't as many judges left when each side chooses to use a peremptory challenge against a judge. Currently, only Clark and Washoe Counties would qualify under this metric, but those counties are definitely more representative of the population of Nevada as a whole. The lack of modernization results in a lack of confidence in the judicial system and judicial proceedings, especially when it comes to contentious cases such as initiative petitions.

With that background, even though the bill is relatively straightforward, I want to take you through it. Section 4 specifies what a qualified district court means in the context of a dispute about the signature-gathering process for initiative petitions. As you all know, for initiative petitions, one of the first things you have to do is gather signatures. If that process is being challenged, section 4 tells you where you would be able to file a case if there was a challenge to that, and it would be a qualified district court. Section 5 applies that same qualified district court standard to the context of a dispute about that signature verification process. And then in section 6, when there's a challenge to the single-subject rule and the description of effect for petition initiatives, that would specify what a qualified district court means.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
I've heard about the concern regarding this for many sessions, and I and many others felt this needed to be remedied but [was] too big a fight to take on. You are our champion who is not afraid to take on big fights. For years, I've heard concern as our population centers have grown in other judicial districts. We are a state that has initiative referendum and recall that allows direct participation in democracy by our voters. It is so important—having the geographical difficulties and certainly the technological difficulties with so many of these cases, having to go to this particular district rather than perhaps the home district. I think it is such a timely bill, such a great bill.

As a reminder, we are addressing the first reprint of A.B. 490.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
I want to note the bill started out much more expansive. It applied to everything where the First Judicial District had exclusive jurisdiction. So there are 12, 13, 14 categories of cases in the law where you must file here in Carson City in the First Judicial District. In looking at that, and to your point, Chair, I wanted to be a little bit more targeted. What you see in this first reprint is we're only talking about petition initiatives.

One of the reasons I picked those is almost every petition initiative case is challenged in court. From the moment the thing is filed, it is challenged on the single-subject rule; it is challenged on the description of effect; and then if there are disputes about the signatures, those get challenged. In fact, I don't remember a petition initiative in recent history that has not been challenged on the single-subject rule or the description of effect. This bill just targets that one category of case, and it says the following—this is the part that I did not quite get to: Jurisdiction can remain here in the First Judicial District, but they need to modernize. They need to have online access to their documents, and there needs to be a way for the public to watch the hearings without having to travel to Carson City. I am happy to report that I think the First Judicial District Court is very close to modernizing.

One of the reasons I think it makes sense to do this now, many of you may now know, is that for a long time, we had two long-serving district court judges here in the First Judicial District. They developed an expertise and knowledge around these cases. We've now had turnover where both of those judges have retired, and we have two new judges serving here in the First Judicial District Court. I

think that's good for a couple of reasons. Number one, I think they are motivated to modernize in a way so that these important cases that happen here can be accessible to the public. But also we should recognize that expertise that developed with those judges over many, many years and decades is not there anymore. So, I think there's a good reason to spread these cases out.

The First Judicial District can keep the cases as long as they modernize, and then the other two options would be to file in a district court that has five or more judges where they have modernization, so essentially Clark or Washoe County. What would happen is if someone was going to file a challenge on this case, the litigant would decide where to file. They could choose among those three jurisdictions in terms of where they wanted to file only for these very select petition initiative cases.

I just think that is a better way to distribute the cases. Maybe we ought to look at all the exclusive jurisdiction in Carson City like I did in the original bill, but on second thought, I thought maybe to just take a small bite of that apple because I know, for myself, these petition initiative cases matter a lot to us in the Legislature because these are the things that come to the Legislature as initiative petitions, and we have 40 days to act on them. When you are in Las Vegas—for me in Las Vegas, or Senator Krasner has [it] a little bit easier because she can drive down—you are not able to watch the arguments online. You're not able to access the documents online. I think that is a disservice, not just to us as Legislators because these things are going to fall into our laps but for our constituents and for reporters to be able to report about what is being talked about.

Finally, Chair, just by way of context, one question I anticipate is what kind of things do we get by petition initiative? Some of you have been here longer than others, but I think about last session when we had the right to strike for teachers, a couple of sessions before that we had the raising of the gaming and mining taxes, [and] we had petition initiatives related to funding education. These are usually the big issues that have a dramatic impact on the State. So, to tell somebody they have to travel to Carson City in person to watch the hearing, or they have to travel here and actually make a request at the courthouse to get a document—that seems to me to be a disservice. But I wanted to make clear that it doesn't exclude Carson City. We just need them to

modernize, and I think they are on track to do that. So, Chair, with that very long presentation for a very short bill, I will stop and answer any questions.

SENATOR KRASNER:
How expensive is it to modernize? They just need a camera so we can see the proceedings, and then they need to put the documents on the internet, right?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER YEAGER:
Essentially, you're right. We need a case management system, and I think that's in the works, and they need to be able to stream like we do at the Legislature. We're streaming to Las Vegas right now. So that technology is there. I don't know what the cost is, but I have been advised that Carson City is on their way to doing that. Truthfully, I think some of our smaller jurisdictions might never modernize in that way. It's a big cost when you only have one judge. But I think the Nevada Supreme Court is trying to be supportive in helping to modernize.

So, I don't think the cost is overly burdensome; and if I am being realistic, it really makes sense for the First Judicial District Court, not just for these types of cases, but for all the other kinds of really important cases that have exclusive jurisdiction here. One would be elections. When you think about it, every presidential election we have a bunch of lawsuits that are filed challenging this, that or the other that happened in the election; and those are exclusive to Carson City. Beyond these kinds of cases, there are benefits to modernization that will apply to all those different cases. I don't have a solid answer for you, but I think they are on the way to doing that. I hope that provides us with a little last motivation to get there so we don't have to drive here to watch the hearings.

CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for joining us today. I did want to report to you that we did a work session on your A.B. 306 today, and it did pass. I will now close the hearing on Assembly Bill 490 and move to public comment.

JANE B. DAVIS:
I am a voter from Nye County. I am strongly opposed to a recent resolution [A.J.R. 14] that was introduced by the Legislators as it assumes it is expressing the sentiments of all Nevadans.

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 14 (1st Reprint): Condemns the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and denounces the use of presidential pardons and commutations to absolve the rioters. (BDR R-991)

It does not. My understanding is that communications from Legislators reflect their constituents' opinions. It should be made clear that the resolution reflects the Legislators' sentiments, not all Nevadans'. I agree with condemning that type of attack but totally disagree with your stance on this specific condemnation of the President's pardons and commutations. The President had and has access to information you as Legislators did not and do not have. If you do have evidence, not hearsay, to the contrary, Nevadans need to be informed before producing such a resolution as if you are speaking on behalf of all Nevadans. Please vote no on this resolution.

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CHAIR OHRENSCHALL:
We have a letter of support (Exhibit E) from Ishika Bhakta with the Children's Advocacy Alliance for A.B. 148.

We are adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Connie Summers,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Senator James Ohrenschall, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	**Exhibit Letter**	**Introduced on Minute Report Page No.**	**Witness / Entity**	**Description**
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
A.B. 306	C	8	Pepper Sturm	Work Session Document
A.B. 148	D	9	Assemblymember Gregory Hafen II	2026 Primary Election Calendar
A.B. 148	E	22	Ishika Bhakta / Children's Advocacy Alliance	Letter in Support