

A Leg Up

The Weekly Legislative Update for the Clark County School District

February 9, 2013

Starting with the best version of *Home Means Nevada* I've ever heard (accompanied by harmonica and spoons), the 77th Regular Session of the Nevada State Legislature began Monday, February 4, 2013 with the usual mix of fanfare, families, and photo shoots .

Democratic and Republican leaders in both houses stated that they are looking forward to a session where policy trumps politics and everyone works together to "build a better Nevada." The Senate Majority Leader, Mo Denis, gave a moving speech in which he honored the memory of his father who worked hard his entire life to afford his children the opportunity to succeed. Senator Denis' father passed away recently, and as a tribute he wore his father's shoes while he was sworn in as the leader of the Senate.

Assembly Speaker Marilyn Kirkpatrick acknowledged that now is time to act and stated that "we can no longer ask our teachers, students, and parents to do more with less." Assemblywoman Kirkpatrick demonstrated her fiery passion for Nevada – and for education – as she addressed her colleagues. The Legislature will be considering a number of issues over the session that will impact education including a weighted pupil funding formula, full-day Kindergarten, early childhood education, and programs for English language learners, among others.

On Wednesday, February 6, both the Assembly Education and Senate Education committees held their first meetings, both beginning with committee introductions and a discussion of organizational procedures the committees will follow.

The Assembly received a brief presentation from their Committee Policy Analyst, Todd Butterworth. His presentation reviewed The Council of State Governments top five education issues: (1) College and Career Readiness, (2) Assessment and Accountability Systems, (3) Preparation of Teachers and School Leaders, (4) College Completion, and (5) Funding Options for Postsecondary Education. Assembly Committee Chair Elliot Anderson set a collegial and friendly atmosphere and demonstrated he intends to cover a lot of ground during the session.

Senate Education Committee Chair, Joyce Woodhouse, a long-time friend of education, kicked off the Senate Education Committee with a presentation on Digital Learning Day. Representatives from the Nevada Department of Education, Washoe County School District, Carson City School District, two impressive students, and CCSD's Jhone Ebert presented the many ways technology is advancing learning in the digital age.

Also this week, the Legislature took up the critical issue, particularly to local governments, of the Consolidated Tax (known as "C-tax") on the second day of session and continuing to a second meeting on Thursday, fulfilling Speaker Kirkpatrick's and Senate Majority Leader Denis' promises that substantial discussions would begin on Day 2.

Looking forward to next week, there will be a presentation by Dr. Jim Guthrie on the “Status of Education in Nevada,” followed by presentations from selected school districts (including Deputy Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky representing CCSD) in the Senate Education Committee on Monday, February 11. On Wednesday, February 13 there will be another presentation on Digital Learning Day, this time in the Assembly Education Committee. Please refer to the attachment “Education Hearings Feb 9” for a list of upcoming meetings and topics that we know about at this point. Please don’t rely on it for definitive information about hearings as it’s a list that will change and be added to on a nearly daily basis, but it will help you be aware of what is on the horizon. Be sure to check the legislative website for complete details.

Speaking of the legislative website, if you haven’t done so lately, please take a few moments to click around on the home page of the Nevada State Legislature [<http://www.leg.state.nv.us/>]. They’ve made some changes that make it easier than ever for you to stay informed about what is going on in Carson City. The columns on each side of the page link you to many rich resources that are worth exploring. To begin with, I suggest you familiarize yourself with two links in particular, both on the top of the right-hand column on the home page.

First, the “Calendar of Meetings/View” link at the top of the list will take you directly a list of meetings coming up – including floor sessions. Spend a few minutes clicking on all of the options on the “Upcoming Meetings” list – you’ll find it’s an easy resource designed to help you navigate to information about the committee, get a copy of the agenda, access the language of the bills being discussed, find budgets and fiscal notes for bills, download materials and handouts presented during the hearing, and – when the committee is actually in session – watch the proceedings as they take place. It is truly impressive.

The second link that is invaluable is the link to NELIS – the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System. It would take a lengthy manual to explain everything this link can do, but if you spend a few minutes clicking around on the various options, you’ll find information at your fingertips that was not easily accessible before.

You have received this update because your name is on the list I maintained during the 2011 legislative session or because you’ve asked to be added to it since then. If you’d like to be removed from the list, please let me know. Additionally, if you know of other individuals who would like to be added, just shoot me their name and email address and I’ll add them.

Thanks for your interest in the Nevada State Legislature!