

Legislative Update

February 6, 2015

We're off and running! And I do mean RUNNING!

The first week of the legislative session is always an exciting time, but the level of energy in the building and numbers of issues on the front-burner seem more intense than usual this year, particularly for the first week of a session.

First, a trio of personal issues:

- ~ Senator Debbie Smith, a long-time champion of public education and friend of Nevada school districts, underwent surgery on Friday to remove an “operable brain tumor.” Her family has indicated the surgery was successful, but it is still unknown when she will be able to return to Carson City. We wish her a speedy recovery, and for anyone who would like to join the chorus of well-wishers on social media, connect the hash tag #SendingYouStrengthDebbie to your photo or message.
- ~ Assemblyman Paul Anderson’s wife and four children were in a serious auto accident as they were driving to Carson City to be with Mr. Anderson on the first day of session. Fortunately, their injuries were less serious than may have been warranted by the accident, and in his opening remarks at the Assembly, Majority Leader Anderson gave a heartfelt thanks to Lyon County first responders who took care of his family.
- ~ Assemblyman Ira Hansen learned of the birth of a healthy new grandson during the Assembly Floor Session on Thursday, and moments later was notified that one of his son-in-laws had been seriously injured in a life-threatening car accident.

Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the urgency of issues and the details of legislation, but incidents like these serve as reminders to us that while the work of the Nevada Legislature is important, our legislators must deal with personal and family issues in the middle of the public service they provide. We appreciate the sacrifices they make for us as they deal with the business of the State.

And speaking of business, the committee chairs wasted no time in scheduling major hearings on major issues during the first week – something that has rarely happened before. While many bills were heard in many committees, here are three that could directly impact CCSD schools:

- ~ Assembly Bill 2, which would allow weapons to be stored in vehicles on school property, was heard by the Assembly Judiciary Committee on February 3, 2015. The bill received both support and opposition and is expected to be significantly amended to narrow its scope and provide greater limitations than the current version.
- ~ The first meeting of the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, February 3rd included a hearing on one of CCSD bills, Senate Bill 75. This bill seeks to ensure a minimum amount of instruction is available to all students prior to high stakes testing. The bill received support from Nevada's school districts, the Clark County Education Association, the Nevada Association of School Boards, and the Nevada Association of School Superintendents. There was no opposition to the bill.
- ~ On Wednesday, February 4th, in Senate Government Affairs, a major hearing was held on an issue that is significant for CCSD: funding for school construction. Senate Bill 119 would allow school districts throughout Nevada a 10-year “rollover” of existing revenues for capital construction at the last voter-approved rate of funding. This would have a significant impact for CCSD; it would allow us to quickly

begin construction of 6 new schools and 10 school additions to take care of the growth in student population we've been experiencing. The funding would allow CCSD to develop a 10-year plan for the renovation of existing schools and siting of future schools. (See "CCSD Shovel Ready Projects 2015-16")

The bill includes a section that would remove the "prevailing wage" requirement for school construction. This is a very controversial issue, and the hearing rooms (both in Carson City and in Las Vegas) were packed, as were the overflow rooms that were made available as the hearing rooms filled up. Speakers overwhelmingly supported the parts of the bill that would provide the funding for school construction, but many of the speakers were vocal in their defense of prevailing wage and asked that those provisions be removed.

On Friday, February 6, the bill was moved out of committee on a 3-1 vote along party lines with the prevailing wage provisions intact. It is uncertain when it will be scheduled for a vote on the Senate Floor.

Coming Up

To keep current about hearings that are scheduled (and sometimes rescheduled) during the session, it's important to utilize the "Calendar of Meetings" link on the Nevada Legislature website (www.leg.state.nv.us). There you will find the most accurate list of committee meeting dates and times as well as the bills scheduled to be heard. In general, it's good to be aware of the standing education committees: **Assembly Education Committee** meets on Monday and Wednesday at 3:15; **Senate Education Committee** meets on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at 3:30. Agendas are posted on the website.

Here are two notable hearings of particular interest to CCSD, scheduled for next week:

~ **Monday, February 9, 3:15 in Assembly Education: Assembly Bill 55**

This is CCSD's bill that would allow teachers we've recruited from other states to possess a temporary teaching permit while they complete the licensure requirements for Nevada.

~ **Thursday, February 12, 8:00 a.m. in Senate Finance – Budget Hearings**

During his State of the State address, Governor Sandoval announced his commitment to many existing education programs and announced a number of new programs that will bring additional dollars targeted at specific education programs that will make a difference in the lives of students. Please see "Education Overview" for a brief synopsis of these programs.

The State Treasurer has created an alternative budget proposal which would eliminate most of the new programs proposed by Governor Sandoval, as well as decrease other educational spending. (See "State Treasurer's Office Alternative Budget.")

CCSD representatives will provide testimony in support of Governor Sandoval's budget.

Attachments

This update references the following materials which are attached to the email:

- "CCSD Shovel Ready Projects 2015-16"
- "Education Overview FINAL" (prepared by the Nevada Department of Education)
- "State Treasurer's Office Alternative Budget" (A press release from the State Treasurer's office)
- CCSD Legislation Status 2-6-15: This grid is the comprehensive document of legislation being tracked by the CCSD lobbying team. In addition to bills that have an obvious impact on our schools, we also keep an eye on bills that could have an impact on our business operations, funding sources, and other peripheral issues. As the session progresses, we often add and delete bills on this list, depending on the intent and language of the bill.

Want to Learn More?

In case you didn't know:

Calendar of Meetings: As mentioned earlier in this update, one of the most important tools you can use to stay informed during the legislative session is the link to the Calendar of Meetings, found on the top right hand corner of the Nevada Legislature webpage. Or, find it by following this direct link: <https://leg.state.nv.us/App/Calendar/A/>.

In addition to providing you the most up-to-date list of the meeting schedule and the bills to be heard (with click-on-links that take you directly to the bill . . . how easy is that???!), the "VIEW" link that appears under the date and time column *when the meeting is taking place* allows you to access the live feed of the hearing in real time. It is a feature that makes it simple for you to see and hear exactly what is going on in Carson City without leaving your home or office.

Personal Legislative Tracking: Known as "PLT" (<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/78th2015/Plt>), this FREE feature of the legislative website allows you to indicate which bills you'd like to follow. All you have to do is register and apply the easy-to-use features to identify the bills you are interested in. The grid of bills that is provided to you each week outlines all of the bills that CCSD follows, but many of them are bills that are not of much interest to the general public. With PLT you can narrow down the list to the bills that matter to you. Once you've identified the bills you're interested in, when you log into the PLT site, you'll find your personalized list of bills, the hearing dates, and direct links to information related to the bills. Every year I'm amazed at the quality of the legislative website and the increased transparency and access it provides, but this year's new PLT tops the chart!