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Member Groups

A Rainbow Place – Northern Nevada's
Gay & Lesbian Community Center
ACLU of Nevada
AFL-CIO of Nevada
AFSCME International
Alianza Latina
Alliance for Workers' Rights
American Lands
Citizen Alert
Committee to Aid Abused Women
Common Cause
Culinary Workers Union Local #226
Gay & Lesbian Community Center
of Southern Nevada
Great Basin Mine Watch
H.E.R.E. Local #86
Laborers International Union of America #169
Latinos for Political Education (LAPE)
NAACP, Northern Nevada Chapter
National Association of
Social Workers - Nevada
Nevada Disability Forum
Nevada Empowered Women's Project
Nevada Lawyers for Progressive Policy
Nevada Nurses Association
Nevada State Education Association
Nevada Trial Lawyers Association
Nevada Urban Indians
Nevada Wilderness Project
Nevada Women's Lobby
Northern Nevada Building Trades Council
Operating Engineers, Local 3
PFLAG of Reno/Northern Nevada
Planned Parenthood of Mar Monte of
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Planned Parenthood of Southern Nevada
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
Reno-Sparks NAACP
Reno Gay Pride, Inc.
Rural Alliance for Military Accountability (RAMA)
S.E.I.U. Local #1107
Sierra Club, Toiyabe Chapter
State of Nevada Employees Association
Sunrise Sustainable Resources Group
Truckee Meadows Human Services Association
Unitarian Universalists
Social Action Committee
Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada

January 30th, 2002

Chairman Hobbs and Members of the Task Force,

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada is a statewide coalition of 43 member groups. Our mission is to create more progressive state policies in Nevada through research, public education and leadership development. In 2001, we began a study of the tax system in Nevada and have come to consensus on our recommendations. We are finalizing our report and will have it available after April 1st. We would like to be able to present those recommendations to you at the point when you will be discussing the revenue side of the overall picture.

We now would like to share with you some of the reasons that we felt it was necessary to raise additional revenues. First we examined the need to bring Nevada up to the "average" level in the United States on the per pupil expenditures. Nevada would need an additional \$500 million per year just to reach that average. No one in our group felt that Nevada should remain at that level but all felt we must first bring our state up to "average" and then try to do better.

We then attempted to address the issue of where we stand in human services related to the rest of the country. Nevada recently was rated near the bottom on the health of women – ranking 38th. In that same study, Nevada was also mentioned as one of four states that were deteriorating in many aspects of women's health. One suggested solution would be to allow parents of children enrolled in our Nevada Check Up Program to also enroll. Programs of this kind allow us to access more federal dollars. This program has a 60 cents federal match for every 40 cents provided by the state. Also, nationally, 15% of children under 18 were uninsured. In Nevada that number is 22%. We need to get more children enrolled in our programs (Medicaid, Nevada Check Up, etc.) which will require more state funds to access those federal dollars.

Other areas we looked at were the needs of teenagers. Nevada leads the nation in teen suicide rates- between 1.5 and 2.4 times the national average, teens who have not completed high school – 50th, teen violent deaths – 30th,



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teen pregnancy – 42nd, teen drug and alcohol abuse. These statistics come from the Kid's Count publication done annually with support from the state of Nevada and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We need more programs to provide services to teenagers who obviously need assistance and are not getting what they need.

Nevada has had the same grant to low-income families in the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program for over 11 years. We give this temporary assistance (welfare) to about 25,000 individuals, of whom over 2/3's are children and we expect them to live on this while they are looking for employment. Nevada's grant for a woman with two children is \$348 per month maximum. No one can expect people to live on this. PLAN, in 2001, released a report called *Working Hard, Living Poor, Part 1: Nevada: Basic Needs and a Living Wage* which studied what workers needed to earn in order to provide basics for themselves and their families. For a family of three, the wage earner would have to earn \$14.57 per hour in order to just make ends meet. TANF grants are not enough and need to be increased.

Funding for childcare assistance has increased dramatically in the last 6 years. Yet, when we are compared with other states, we fall far short of the grant that we give to families living below the poverty wage. In Nevada, we have the highest childcare co-pay and we base the amount on a fixed amount of income rather than on cost like most states. So, we basically encourage parents to choose the "cheapest" childcare they can rather than choose for quality. Changing the standard and adding state dollars could help the working poor stay off of welfare and other public assistance programs.

Our Food Banks raise all of their funds from private sources. Nevada is one of a few states which provide no state assistance for this very basic need. Many hard working families end up at the food banks around the state when their limited incomes leave them short. Also, with September 11th, Food Banks have publicly reported a rise in demand for food. It is time for the state of Nevada to provide financial support for our food banks.



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Last legislative session, a bill was passed which assisted low-income households with energy assistance by a mill assessment on all energy bills. We now are going to be able to serve 45,000 households who need help. There are still over 100,000 households which will not be served.

In Nevada, one in four children are not immunized. We need to address that need with better outreach and subsidized immunizations. We also have programs which are severely underfunded like the Family Resource Centers which help to assist families to access the limited services available. Yet, we continue to expect them to hobble along with what we have given them and to compete with all the other programs for limited state and private money.

As a member of the Department of Human Resources Block Grant Commission, I have been able to see these underfunded programs as non-profits try to access dollars from our committee. We make recommendations for the distribution of non-state Title XX dollars. Title XX is part of the federal Social Security Act and are designed to give maximum flexibility to States to allow them to use Federal funds to fill the gaps in funding for needed services. Nevada uses 94% of those dollars for state programs thus supplanting General Fund dollars. The rest – 6% – is put out for an RFP (request for proposal) which the Block Grant Commission reviews. We have 3 times as many applicants as money available. The total available for the non-state portion is \$762,000 and the state portion is \$12.3 million.

Finally, Nevada ranks last in the United States in per capita spending on Medicaid, less than one-half the national average. Only 4.7% of Nevadans are covered by Medicaid compared to the national average of 9.3%. Nevada has chosen not to access the optional coverages which most states do. For example, only 26% of Nevadans under 65 years old living in families with incomes below the poverty level have Medicaid coverage. The national average is 45.6% of that population.

We hope you can see from the statistics that Nevada needs to make some definite changes in their services for families. We realize that we have left out many services which also need to be addressed but we hope that others



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will come forward to talk about the lack of substance abuse treatment programs, the lack of services for disabled citizens and many other issues.

PLAN's estimate for funding new human services needs is between \$250 million to \$500 million per year. With education included, we agreed that Nevada needs an addition of at least \$750 million per year. We will be here to address how those dollars should be raised.

In the task forces earlier discussions about the structural deficit, we noted a correlation that was not addressed. When our state is in an economic downturn, social services needs go up. People who are out of work apply more often for food stamps, Medicaid and TANF. Thus, if you use the middle estimate for revenues, you probably should use a higher estimate for expenses.

We thank you very much for allowing us to present this information to the committee. We appreciate all the hard work that all of you and your technical working group have put into this task force.

Jan Gilbert
Northern Nevada Coordinator
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

