

NEVADA YOUTH LEGISLATURE: ANNUAL REPORT 2018–2019



OVERVIEW

As the 2017–2019 Term of the Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL) comes to an end, there is much to reflect on. In the first year, youth legislators participated in monthly skill trainings that focused on: constituent outreach, listening, message accountability, negotiations, presentations, and more. During the second year of the term, those lessons had a clear purpose and use. The main focus of the second year was the submission of a bill draft request (BDR). With this selection process, along with presenting it to the Nevada Legislature, youth legislators utilized each one of the skills taught during the first year of the term.

Throughout the term, youth legislators showcased the importance of being representatives of and for the youth in their state senate districts—this population ranged between 27,000 and 42,000 youth under 18 years of age. This representation included listening to the concerns of peers through the establishment of District Youth Advisory Councils (DYACs), which included up to two students from each high school in each senate district. Youth legislators maintained regular contact with their DYAC members. Compromise was also at the core of each youth legislator’s commitment to serving the youth of Nevada. This was ultimately demonstrated when the NYL listened to BDR proposals, introduced by each youth legislator, which the NYL then narrowed from 19 to 1. By deciding whose BDR would become the NYL bill, an eye for compromise and collaboration was necessary.

Submitted by:

Youth Legislator Olivia Yamamoto, Chair
Nevada Youth Legislature, 2018–2019
May 30, 2019

MEETINGS

August 20, 2018

To begin the second year of the term, all youth legislators met in the Grant Sawyer Building in Las Vegas for a full-day mid-term training. Senator Valerie Wiener (Ret.), Chair, Board of Directors for Corporation for Public Benefit to Administer the NYL, administered the oath of office to three new youth legislators. She also discussed the trainings, timelines, and expectations for the final year of the NYL term. Former Youth Legislator Evan Gong explained the importance of personal accountability, both as youth legislators and as informed citizens. Jessica Dummer, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), clarified the requirements for submitting a BDR from a legal standpoint. Youth legislators were then divided into small groups, led by: Senator Yvanna D. Cancela, Senate District 10; Senator Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy, M.D., Senate District 12; Assemblyman Jim Marchant, Assembly District 37; and Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Assembly District 16. Each legislator shared their experiences with, as well as insights about, BDRs and how to maximize the bill-drafting process. Following these discussions, a youth legislator from each small group presented a summary to the entire NYL. Senator Wiener gave a presentation on the history of NYL bills and the successes they have had in the Legislature. Thereafter, former Youth Legislators Rose Asaf, Alex Bybee, Evan Gong, and Zhan Okuda-Lim worked with small groups of youth legislators on potential ideas for BDRs. To conclude, Senator Wiener discussed the process of the BDR, “From Idea to Action,” and celebrated the end of the training with the traditional carrot cake.

September 11, 2018

Prior to this meeting, youth legislators were required to submit their BDR proposals. During the meeting, youth legislators sat at the witness table to present their BDRs and answer questions posed by their NYL colleagues. Out of 19 original BDRS, youth legislators were given the task of narrowing these down to 7 via voting. Following this, Gail J. Anderson, Deputy for Southern Nevada, Office of the Secretary of State, gave a presentation on the Nevada Student Mock Election and the Helen J. Stewart Award. Thereafter, youth legislators were asked to complete a survey regarding the first year of their terms. To conclude, Senator Wiener clarified youth legislators’ responsibilities during the upcoming year. Minutes from the April 12, 2018, meeting were approved.

October 16, 2018

During this meeting, youth legislators again testified and answered questions relating to the seven BDRs, which the NYL selected in September. The members of the NYL were eager to learn more about the details and the legislative intent of each measure. Youth legislators voted to narrow these seven BDRs down to two to be discussed further at the November meeting. The two BDRs selected were Chair Olivia Yamamoto's BDR to eliminate the gay and trans panic defense and Youth Legislator Vivek Yanamadula's and Youth Legislator Leaf Kaboli's combined BDR to revise statutes on teacher licensing and teacher retention. Minutes from the September 11, 2018, meeting were approved.

November 14, 2018

By the conclusion of this meeting, youth legislators selected the one NYL BDR to be introduced in the 2019 Legislative Session. It was quite a task to select the final BDR. Chair Yamamoto, as well as Youth Legislator Kaboli and Youth Legislator Yanamadula, presented their respective BDRs to the NYL. In addition, various witnesses testified on each measure. After two rounds of voting, each producing a tie vote, Senator Wiener explained that, if the third round produced a tie vote, the NYL would not have a bill to introduce in the 2019 Legislative Session. During the third vote, the NYL selected Chair Yamamoto's BDR, which would eliminate the gay and trans panic defense, to be the NYL's 2019 bill. Minutes from the October 16, 2018, meeting were approved.

January 10, 2019

To begin this meeting, Senator Wiener made a presentation on "How to Maximize Outcomes for the NYL Bill." Aligned with this topic, youth legislators were divided into discussion groups, led by: Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen, Assembly District 29; Assemblyman Edgar Flores, Assembly District 28; and Assemblyman Jim Wheeler, Assembly District 39. One youth legislator from each group reported the key points of their discussion to the entire NYL. Following this, Alex Bybee, former NYL Chair, Daniel Waqar, former NYL Vice Chair, and Evan Gong, former Youth Legislator, shared experiences and insights about how to maximize the outcome of the NYL bill. After that, youth legislators engaged in a paired activity regarding how to maximize the NYL bill. To conclude, Senator Wiener provided an explanation regarding the final official NYL outside activity, which required youth legislators to write an outreach letter to an organization. This letter would help recruit applicants for appointment to the NYL's 2019–2021 Term. Minutes from the November 14, 2018, meeting were approved.

ANNUAL NYL GATHERING

On Friday, January 4, 2019, in Las Vegas and Saturday, January 5, 2019, in Carson City, past and current NYL members and members of Board of Directors for Corporation for Public Benefit to Administer the NYL, as well as legislators and supporters of the NYL, gathered to celebrate the 12th year of the NYL Program.

ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION

- Youth Legislator Naomi Atnafu consulted with the Nevada Association of Student Councils to select the student member of the State Board of Education;
- Youth Legislator Nathan Tea worked with Assemblyman Wheeler to introduce Assembly Bill 338, which would revise requirements for the operation of a motor vehicle by a young driver;
- Youth Legislator Colyn Abron worked with Senator Patricia (Pat) Spearman, Senate District 1, to introduce Senate Bill 204, which would revise provisions for educating students about mental health issues; and
- Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senate District 5, sponsored Senate Bill 108, which would make various changes to the NYL.

“NYL SPECIAL DAY” AT THE LEGISLATURE

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Board of Directors for Corporation for Public Benefit to Administer the NYL, youth legislators were able to travel from southern Nevada to Carson City for the “NYL Special Day” at the Legislature. This included presenting the NYL bill, Senate Bill 97, to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Chair Yamamoto and Vice Chair Rachel Rush introduced SB 97 to the Committee. Several witnesses, representing the Human Rights Campaign, Transgender Allies Group, Silver State Equality, Human Services Network, Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, Planned Parenthood Votes Nevada, and Lutheran Engagement Advocacy in Nevada, supported SB 97. The Nevada Attorneys for Civil Justice, Nevada District Attorneys Association, Washoe County Public Defender, and Office of the Clark County Public Defender testified in opposition to SB 97. Following the Committee hearing, youth legislators had the opportunity to debrief on the committee experience. They then proceeded to the Senate Floor, where they sat with and were introduced by their appointing senators.

During the afternoon, Youth legislators had the option to attend committee hearings or meet with Legislators to lobby for support of SB 97. In addition, Youth Legislator Jamie Harrison made a presentation about the history, trainings, and accomplishments of the NYL Program to the Assembly Education Committee. This included his introduction of the 15 other youth legislators in attendance. Following this presentation, Chair Tyrone Thompson opened up the meeting for questions from the Committee and responses from various youth legislators who went to the witness table to respond. Before leaving the Legislature, youth legislators were treated to the ceremonial carrot cake.

NYL PRESENTATION TO ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

On April 24, 2019, the Assembly Judiciary Committee heard SB 97. Chair Yamamoto, along with Senator Melanie Scheible, Senate District 9, and Senator Dallas Harris, Senate District 11, presented SB 97.

OPTIONAL NYL CONFERENCE CALL

On an April 11, 2019, conference call, Chair Yamamoto, Youth Legislator Kaboli, Youth Legislator Tea, Youth Legislator Harrison, and Youth Legislator Yanamadula discussed their experiences with the NYL over the course of the last two years. Everyone on the call provided suggestions about how to refine current trainings and activities, as well as offered ideas about new ones for the 2019–2021 Term.

SUCCESS OF SB 97

- Voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, with one amendment, 7 to 1, on March 29, 2019;
- Voted out of the Senate, with no additional amendments, 19 to 2, on April 16, 2019;
- Voted out of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, with no amendments, 13 to 2, on May 1, 2019;
- Voted out of the Assembly, with no amendments, 36 to 3 with 2 absences and 1 vacancy, on May 7, 2019;
- Approved by Governor Steve Sisolak on May 14, 2019; and
- Effective on October 1, 2019.