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TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice (NACJ)

DATE: February 28, 2019

RE: SJR1 (2017) – Hearing March 1, 2019

Comments on SJR1 (2017)

Support for SJR1

Basis for Support

SJR1 is a positive constitutional amendment and would address two current issues with the State Board of Pardons Commissioners. The first issue is that the Board currently meets very infrequently, requiring meritorious petitions to languish. The amendment would address that problem by requiring the Board to meet at least quarterly, ensuring that petitioners will get the relief they deserve.

The second issue is that currently, the Governor can veto a petition for clemency even if every other member of the Board agrees that it has merit. There is no justification for this. The point of vesting clemency in a whole Board (as opposed to solely with the Governor, as some other states do) is to take advantage of the collective wisdom of the whole Board. Letting the Governor veto petitions goes against this policy goal.¹ SJR1 addresses this problem as well.

Therefore, NACJ gladly supports its passage.

Jim Hoffman
NACJ Legislative Committee

¹ For instance, consider the recent case of Fred Steese, a man who was falsely imprisoned for a murder he did not commit. Fred was found actually innocent by then-Judge Cadish and released from prison. He then petitioned for a pardon, and the Pardons Board approved the petition by an 8-1 vote, with only the then-Attorney General ignoring the judge's ruling. Had that Attorney General been Governor, Fred's pardon would have been rejected, and an innocent man would have still been wrongly branded a felon.