



# Fact Sheet

## A BRIEF HISTORY ON THE COMMENCEMENT AND LENGTH OF NEVADA'S LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

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AUGUST 2012

### COMMENCEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

- \* Upon its adoption, the *Nevada Constitution* directed that the first session of the Nevada Legislature begin on the second Monday of December 1864; the second regular session on the first Monday of January 1866; and the third regular session, which would be the first of the biennial sessions, on the first Monday of January 1867.
- \* In a special election in 1889, the voters approved a constitutional amendment that changed the beginning of each session from the first Monday to the third Monday in January.
- \* In 1958, the voters approved a constitutional amendment providing for annual sessions. Two years later, however, the voters approved an initiative returning to biennial sessions. Therefore, 1960 was the only regular annual session of the Legislature.
- \* Regular sessions have been held every odd-numbered year since 1867, except for the additional regular session held in 1960.

### LENGTH OF LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

- \* Originally, the *Nevada Constitution* called for regular sessions to be no more than 60 days in length, and the first Legislatures operated within this time frame.
- \* From 1909 to 1957, the sessions were officially recorded as 60 days long, even though they actually extended beyond the limitation.
- \* During these sessions, if it was determined that legislative business could not be completed by the 60th day, the Legislature would "cover the clock" and proceed as if the 60th day consisted of an unlimited number of hours.
- \* In 1958, the voters removed this limitation from the Constitution, allowing sessions to continue as long as necessary.
- \* This amendment, while it authorized increasing the length of sessions, limited legislators' salaries to 60 days. After 60 days, members receive only their per diem expenses.
- \* The length of each regular session steadily increased between 1965 and 1997.
- \* From 1989 through 1997, sessions were no less than 161 calendar days—almost three times the original length—with the longest sessions occurring in 1995 and 1997 at 169 days.
- \* These prolonged sessions generated interest among some legislators for a change to annual sessions.
- \* While efforts to establish annual sessions have been unsuccessful, in 1998 Nevada's voters approved a constitutional amendment limiting each legislative session, beginning in 1999, to 120 days and changing the first day of session to the first Monday in February.
- \* Despite the amendment to limit sessions to 120 days, legislators are still paid a salary for only the first 60 days of each session.