



NEVADA LEGISLATURE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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UPDATED NOVEMBER 2012

The purpose of the Nevada Legislature Oral History Project is to conduct and archive the interviews of former legislators who have made significant historical contributions to our State. By making the recordings and transcripts available to the public, it is hoped that the stories captured will enhance the historical understanding of public policy, political culture, and the legislative process in Nevada.

Between 2008 and 2009, the Nevada Legislature Oral History Project conducted 17 video-and audio-taped interviews of former legislators who have made significant contributions to Nevada. In commemoration of the Legislature's 75th Regular Legislative Session, portions of 16 of the interviews were compiled into a 27-minute film titled, "Remembering Citizen Legislators: The Nevada Legislature Oral History Project." Transcripts and videos of all the interviews are now available to the general public for purchase through the Gift Shop of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB). The following libraries and museums have also received a set of transcripts and videos: the Research Library of the LCB; the Nevada State Library and Archives; the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center at the University of Nevada, Reno; the Lied Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; the Nevada Historical Society; and the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas.

The interviews are topical interviews lasting between one and two hours. They focus on important projects, events, and legislation in which the legislator played a leadership role during his or her legislative career. The interviews attempt to capture the unofficial history of the Nevada Legislature by asking questions about the portion of the legislator's life relevant to his or her term(s) in office. Some common themes include how he or she came to serve in the Nevada Legislature, his or her most significant contribution to the legislative process or public policy in Nevada, and "what it was really like" behind the scenes at the Legislature.

PARTICIPANTS

Several factors were considered when identifying former legislators to be interviewed. Some factors included age, length of legislative tenure, contributions to the State of Nevada, and whether a formal oral history of the individual had been published or was underway. The final list provided to the contractor reflected a careful balance of legislative house, political party, and geographic distribution among the interviewees. The following former legislators have been interviewed to date:

Robert R. Barengo
Byron L. "Bill" Bilyeu
Melvin D. Close, Jr.
Joseph E. "Joe" Dini Jr. *
Virgil M. Getto
Lynn C. Hettrick
Thomas J. "Tom" Hickey
John E. "Jack" Jeffrey
John W. Marvel

Donald R. Mello
Joseph M. "Joe" Neal Jr.
Ann O'Connell
Robert E. "Bob" Price Jr.
Raymond D. "Ray" Rawson
William D. "Bill" Swackhamer
Chester C. "Coe" Swobe
Thomas R.C. "Spike" Wilson II

* Included in the collection is an oral history of Joseph Dini's wife, Mouryne B. Landing Dini. Mrs. Dini served as the Chief Clerk of the Nevada State Assembly from 1973 to 1995.

BACKGROUND

During the 74th Legislative Session in 2007, the Nevada Legislature approved Senate Bill 579 (Chapter 345, *Statutes of Nevada 2007*), which appropriated funds to the Legislative Fund for the Research Division of the LCB to create an oral history of the Nevada Legislature. During the same legislative session, another measure that would have allocated funds for the Project, Senate Bill 373, was considered by the Senate Committee on Finance. Testimony proposing the Project was provided at the April 4, 2007, Committee meeting, but no action was taken.

The Research Division of the LCB conducted a competitive bid process to identify and retain a contractor to carry out the project. A committee consisting of LCB and other State personnel with expertise in Nevada history and politics evaluated and ranked the proposals received, which included applicants from across the country. In January 2008, a contract was signed between the LCB and Get Consensus, LLC, for an 18-month program, which ended in June 2009.