

CHAPTER II
LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE,
FINANCIAL OPERATION,
AND
RESPONSIBILITIES

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LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE, FINANCIAL OPERATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This chapter provides an introduction to the Nevada Legislature. It is intended to serve as a handy reference not only for legislators, but also for citizens who wish to participate in the legislative process.

The Legislature is Nevada's foremost political institution. In addition to enacting laws, it creates the machinery for carrying out those enactments. In establishing departments, boards, commissions, and bureaus, the Legislature defines the scope of their powers and the extent of their responsibilities. It also regulates the activities of these state agencies by granting or denying them the authority to hire employees and expend public funds. In addition, the Legislature sets down the fundamental rules of government in Nevada in the form of administrative procedures, civil service rules, and election laws.

LEGISLATIVE TERMINOLOGY

The legislative process has acquired a vocabulary of its own over the years. Often these words have a precise and definite meaning that varies considerably from the same word when used in common conversation. This legislative terminology may also vary in meaning from one state legislature to another.

Appendix F provides a list of frequently used terms, primarily from *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure*. That manual also contains a number of terms not commonly used in Nevada. The list defines the words most commonly used in the Nevada Legislature as well as those that will assist in a clear understanding of the various subjects and procedures described in this publication.

THE LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE

Nevada has a two-house (bicameral) Legislature consisting of a Senate and an Assembly. The two houses jointly are designated by the *Nevada Constitution* as "The Legislature of the State of Nevada."¹ The Legislature is one of three separate and distinct branches of government at the state level, the other two being the Executive Branch (headed by the Governor) and the Judicial Branch (with Nevada's Supreme Court at the top of the structure). According to the *Nevada Constitution*, ". . . no persons charged with the exercise of powers properly belonging to one of these departments shall exercise any functions, appertaining to either of the others . . ." except in certain specified instances.²

However, it is important to realize that:

The Legislature is part of a larger political system . . . No matter how specific the intent of the Legislature, its decisions will require interpretation and implementation by executive officials; no matter how unambiguous its legislative purposes, its laws may come under review in the judicial process.³

Size and Apportionment

Unlike some states, Nevada does not fix the number of its members of the Senate and Assembly in its constitution. Instead, the *Nevada Constitution* sets a maximum limit of 75 legislators from the combined total of the two houses.⁴ No minimum limit is set on the size of the Legislature, but “. . . the number of Senators shall not be less than one-third nor more than one-half of that of the members of the Assembly.”⁵ The actual size of the Legislature is set by statute.⁶

Since 1983, the Nevada Legislature has had a 42-member Assembly and a 21-member Senate. It has not always been that way. The Legislature had the maximum 75 members in 1875, 1877, 1879, 1913, and 1915, during periods of population growth. The Legislature could, in theory, be as small as three members—two Assembly members and one senator. However, the smallest Nevada Legislature consisted of 45 members. This situation occurred during the sessions of 1893 through 1899, a period of population decline. The *Nevada Constitution* states that members of the Senate and Assembly must be apportioned among the several counties of the state or among legislative districts, which may be established by law.⁷ The United States Supreme Court has held that both houses of state legislatures must be apportioned on a population basis under the principle of one person, one vote.⁸

Membership in both houses of the Legislature is geographically apportioned throughout the state on the basis of population. Normally, the Legislature redistricts once every ten years during the session following the federal decennial census, as required by the *Nevada Constitution*.⁹

2011 Reapportionment and Redistricting

The Bureau of the Census of the United States Department of Commerce was required to deliver redistricting data from the decennial census in 2010 to the states not later than April 1, 2011. Upon receipt of this data, the 2011 Session of the Nevada Legislature was required to reapportion and redistrict the election districts for the members of the Legislature, the members of the United States House of Representatives from the State of Nevada, the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada, and the State Board of Education.

Due to an impasse that arose when Governor Brian Sandoval vetoed the redistricting measures approved by the Nevada Legislature, the Legislature was unable to complete the legislative and congressional redistricting process during the 120-day regular session. Two redistricting measures, Senate Bill 497 and Assembly Bill 566, were approved by the Legislature, generally on party-line votes, on May 10 and May 25, 2011, respectively. However, both bills were vetoed by the Governor and returned to the Legislature. No attempts were made to override or sustain those vetoes during the regular session. When the Governor indicated that he would not call the Legislature into special session for redistricting, the task fell to the courts. Following a number of hearings, judicial briefs, motions, and pleas, District Court Judge James T. Russell, in First Judicial District Case No. 11 OC 00042 1B, *Guy et al. v. Miller*, appointed three Special Masters to accomplish redistricting. As directed by the court, the Special Masters held public hearings in Las Vegas and Carson City on October 10 and 11, 2011, respectively. Their report and completed maps were submitted to the District Judge on October 14, 2011. Following certain changes requested by the court, an order adopting and approving the Special Masters' report and redistricting maps as modified by the court was filed on October 27, 2011. An addendum to the October 27 order was filed on December 8, 2011, to facilitate the transitional period from the court's original order until the terms of the congressional representatives and state lawmakers began. The redistricting plans were attached to and incorporated by reference in the court orders.

The court-approved maps include four congressional districts (an increase of one), while the size of the Nevada Legislature is retained at 63–21 members in the Senate and 42 members in the Assembly. For the first time in Nevada's redistricting history, all districts in both houses are single-member, and two Assembly districts are perfectly nested within each Senate district. Maps A through F in Appendix G describe the boundaries of Nevada legislative districts as developed by the Special Masters in 2011. In addition, detailed maps of every district and related statistics are available on the Legislative Counsel Bureau's website at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Districts/Reapp/2011/FinalPlans.cfm> and through the Bureau's Publications/Gift Shop Unit.

The average population of the Assembly districts is 64,299 people (based on the 2010 U.S. Census). The Senate districts have an average population of 128,598 citizens. The average legislative district in Nevada has increased by 35 percent in population over the past decade. The state's population was about 1.2 million in 1990, reached nearly 2 million in 2000, and was just over 2.7 million in 2010. There are now 15 Senate districts wholly within Clark County; 4 districts in the Washoe County/Carson City area, 1 of which includes 5 counties in western Nevada; and 2 rural districts. One rural district consists of Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, and Storey Counties. The other one consists of Elko, Eureka, Lincoln, White Pine, and parts of Nye and northern Clark Counties. The 42 Assembly districts include 30 districts wholly within Clark County, 8 districts in the Washoe County/Carson City/western Nevada area, and 4 Assembly districts within the 2 rural Senate districts.

Membership Qualifications

Members of the Assembly are elected every two years by the qualified electors in their respective districts. Senators, on the other hand, serve four-year terms, which are staggered so that, as nearly as possible, one-half of the number of Senators is elected every two years. A constitutional amendment approved by Nevada voters in 1996 limits legislators to 12 years of service in one house (six terms for Assembly members and three terms for Senators).¹⁰ An opinion issued by Nevada's Supreme Court states that the term limit amendment only applies to periods of service commencing after November 27, 1996.¹¹ Thus, term limits first impacted members of the Legislature during the 2010 election cycle.

Members of both houses are elected on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years, at intervals of two or four years, depending upon the house in question. Their terms of office begin on the day following their election,¹² but members typically are not sworn in by oath of office until the first day of the legislative session (first Monday of the following February).

To be eligible to serve as a senator or member of the Assembly, a person must be at least 21 years of age, a qualified elector in the respective county and district, and an actual citizen resident of Nevada for a minimum of one year preceding the election.¹³ However, the *Nevada Constitution* declares that "each House shall judge of the qualifications, elections and returns of its own members . . . and with the concurrence of two thirds of all the members elected, [may] expel a member."¹⁴ Thus, theoretically, a house could seat someone who failed to meet the statutory requirements or deny a seat to someone who met all of the legal requirements for membership in the Legislature.

No person holding a federal office of profit (with the exception of postmasters earning less than \$500 per year or commissioners of deeds) or a lucrative office under any other power may serve as a legislator.¹⁵ Persons are also disqualified from holding legislative office if they have been convicted of embezzlement of public funds or bribery in the procurement of election or appointment to office.¹⁶ A legislator may not be appointed to any civil office of profit in the state that was created, or the salary for which was raised, during the legislator's term of office and for a period of one year after the expiration of the term.¹⁷

Vacancies

If a legislator resigns from office, the resignation must be delivered to the Governor. If a legislator dies or resigns during a regular or special session of the Legislature or at a time when no biennial election or regular election is scheduled between the time the vacancy occurs and the date of the next legislative session, the board of county commissioners from the legislator's district is required to appoint a person who resides in the district and is a member of the same political party as the former incumbent to fill the unexpired term.¹⁸

If the senator or Assembly member was elected from a district comprising more than one county, the appointment is required to be made by the county commissioners of each county within or partly within the legislator's district. Each board of county commissioners first meets separately and determines the single candidate it will nominate to fill the vacancy. Then the boards meet jointly, and the chairs, on behalf of the boards, cast a proportionate number of votes based on the population of the district in each county. The person who receives a plurality of these votes is appointed to fill the vacancy. If no candidate receives a plurality of the votes, the various boards of county commissioners each select a candidate. The appointee is then chosen by drawing lots from those candidates nominated by the separate boards.¹⁹

Officers and Employees

Each house of the Legislature employs such staff as is necessary to its operation. During the legislative session, this staff expands to approximately 200 committee staff, personal secretaries, and others who ensure that the session functions smoothly. Several positions are permanent and full-time when the Legislature is not in session: the Secretary of the Senate, the Chief Clerk of the Assembly, and support staff for each house.

The legislative employees are under the supervision of the elected officer of each house. In the Senate, this is the Secretary of the Senate; in the Assembly, the Chief Clerk. The Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly are elected as officers by the members of the houses they serve. They, in turn, supervise the work of the legislative employees.²⁰

The Secretary and Chief Clerk perform many varied duties. They are present at each daily session of their respective houses, and during those sessions they "read" each bill and resolution—though in greatly abbreviated form—to the members of the house. The Secretary and Chief Clerk maintain all records of the Senate and Assembly, supervise compilation of the daily journals and the histories of their respective houses, and advise the presiding officer and members of each house on matters of parliamentary procedure and the house and joint rules.

When the Legislature is not in session, the permanent legislative officers and employees assist legislative leaders with administrative matters that arise during the interim, oversee the publication of the final certified journals and the histories, speak with school and civic groups about the legislative process, represent the state at national conferences of legislative officers, and prepare for the next session.

Interest Groups and Media

PRESS

The news corps is an important adjunct to the Legislature. Public awareness is vital to the democratic process, and it is the function of the press to present, analyze, and interpret the news so that the public is informed and can, therefore, more effectively express itself to and through its elected representatives.

Press representatives are granted official accreditation in each chamber through adoption of a simple motion to accredit named individuals at the beginning of the session or at selected times during the session. Space in each chamber is provided for members of the news media to televise or otherwise cover legislative proceedings.

LOBBYISTS

Legislative agents or representatives, commonly known as lobbyists, represent various organizations, interests, and causes before the Legislature. Like the news media, they are important to the legislative process as sources of information, channels of communication between constituents and their representatives, and major protagonists in efforts to influence legislation. They frequently point out concerns in bills, suggest amendments, provide valuable testimony, and in general assist the Legislature in assessing the merits of proposed legislation.

The activities of lobbyists in Nevada are controlled by the Nevada Lobbying Disclosure Act.²¹ The law requires lobbyists to register with the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and provide various information about themselves and the groups or individuals they represent. A lobbyist must file a report each month during a legislative session and within 30 days after the close of a session concerning his or her lobbying activities. Each report must include the total expenditures for the month and, if the lobbyist had expenditures of \$50 or more during the month, the report must itemize expenses. With the exception of expenditures associated with a function to which every legislator was invited, the reports must identify the legislators on whose behalf the expenditures were made. Violation of the Act is a misdemeanor.

Other sections in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) also address improper influence exerted upon legislators. For example, any person who interferes with the legislative process is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.²² Any person who improperly obtains money or other things of value to influence a member of a legislative body in regard to any vote or legislative action is also guilty of a gross misdemeanor.²³ It is a misdemeanor to misrepresent any fact knowingly when testifying or otherwise communicating to a legislator, though witnesses are absolutely privileged to publish defamatory material that is relevant to a proceeding.²⁴ Moreover, both giving a bribe to a legislator and receiving a bribe are crimes against the legislative power and are subject to severe punishments under the law.²⁵ Although lobbying activities are customarily prohibited on the floor of both chambers,²⁶ lobbyists may appear before any committee of the Legislature.

LEGISLATIVE POWERS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Legislator Duties

The *Nevada Constitution* vests the lawmaking authority for the state in the Nevada Legislature.²⁷ Generally, the Legislature is empowered to enact the laws of the state;²⁸ levy taxes on individuals, businesses, property, and sales;²⁹ appropriate the funds collected for the support of public institutions and the administration of state government;³⁰ propose amendments to the constitutions of the U.S. and Nevada;³¹ and consider legislation proposed by initiative petitions.³² In addition, the Legislature is directed to establish a state university;³³ a public school system;³⁴ and a statewide, uniform system of county and township government.³⁵ The Legislature also has the power to create, revise, or abolish certain county positions;³⁶ determine the compensation of legislative officers and employees,³⁷ certain state officials,³⁸ Supreme Court justices and District Court judges,³⁹ and specified county officers;⁴⁰ decide the winner of a tied election for a district or state office or the office of U.S. Senator or Representative;⁴¹ impeach and try the Governor, other state officials, or any judge, except a justice of the peace;⁴² and pardon, reprieve, or compel the enforcement of a sentence for the conviction for treason.⁴³ The Legislature provides oversight of the Executive and Judicial Branches of government through the budget⁴⁴ and audit⁴⁵ processes and reviews the regulations developed by state agencies.⁴⁶

The majority of the Legislature's work, however, consists of generating, revising, and occasionally repealing the laws of the state. Through a process defined by the *Nevada Constitution*, state law, and legislative rules, the members of the Legislature consider over 1,000 bills and resolutions during each regular session. The regular sessions of the Senate and Assembly are required to be held during each odd-numbered year, beginning on the first Monday of February.⁴⁷ At other times, the Governor may, for a specific purpose, call the Legislature into special session,⁴⁸ or the Legislature may, upon a petition signed by a two-thirds majority of the members elected to each house of the Legislature, convene a special session for a specific purpose without action by the Governor.⁴⁹

During the session, legislators have several responsibilities. They shepherd the measures they introduce through the legislative process by providing testimony at hearings, working with others to improve the legislation, and encouraging their colleagues to vote in favor of their bills. Legislators also serve on the committees that review each piece of legislation. Each legislator is typically assigned to two or more standing committees. As committee members, legislators listen to and question witnesses about the provisions of a measure,⁵⁰ participate in subcommittees created to focus on a specific bill or issue,⁵¹ and vote on whether the bill or resolution should be transmitted to the full house.

At times, all legislators may be required to participate in a committee of the whole.⁵² Typically, such a committee is formed only occasionally during a regular

session. Much more common are conference committees, formed to resolve differences between amendments proposed by each house to the same bill.⁵³ Legislators may be assigned to a joint committee of the two houses, as well.⁵⁴

Legislators also are required to attend the meetings of their respective houses,⁵⁵ commonly referred to as “floor sessions.” The meeting procedures of the Senate, Assembly, and these various committees are discussed elsewhere in this manual.

When not on the floor or in meetings, legislators confer with constituents who call or visit, with lobbyists who represent organizations or certain opinions, and with staff who provide assistance and requested information. Legislators are frequently asked to speak to groups and attend numerous community functions, most often when the Legislature is not in session.

When the session ends, legislators continue to make speeches, assist constituents, serve on special legislative committees, and compile information in preparation for the next session. Often, legislators serve as facilitators among various groups. For example, a legislator might contact a government agency on behalf of a constituent or bring opposing factions together to solve a problem. In addition, legislators monitor the implementation of certain bills passed during the preceding session. In this capacity, a legislator might attend a hearing conducted by a state agency formulating pertinent regulations.

Between sessions, a legislator may serve on one or more interim committees. Some of these committees study a specific subject, provide oversight of ongoing issues, or are part of national organizations that bring together legislators from the various states to discuss similar problems. Permanent committees of the Legislature are created through statute.⁵⁶ Temporary committees usually originate in concurrent resolutions⁵⁷ passed in one session and are dissolved by the beginning of the next.

The foregoing description of legislative responsibilities is not comprehensive. Like employees in the private sector, legislators often are responsible for other duties as assigned. Any legislator who chairs a committee or assumes a leadership role conducts those duties in addition to the ones mentioned. Legislators also are expected by their political parties and communities to perform certain functions, such as attending party caucuses and important local events. In addition, most legislators hold full-time jobs and must fulfill their responsibilities to their employers. Although Nevada prides itself on having a citizen Legislature, it demands a significant commitment of time and effort from each of its citizen representatives.

Privileges and Immunities

Members of the Legislature are immune from arrest on civil process for 15 days prior to and during the course of a session.⁵⁸ An administrative body may not serve subpoenas to compel legislators or the Lieutenant Governor to give testimony or

produce relevant material to the body during legislative sessions.⁵⁹ The statutes also protect legislators by prohibiting employment contracts that work a loss of seniority of any person absent from regular duties or place of employment while attending a legislative session.⁶⁰ In addition, legislative service cannot be considered as a break in service by an administrator of a private pension plan.⁶¹

Limitations on the Legislative Power

Although the Nevada Legislature has far-ranging authority to enact legislation dealing with social and political concerns, it is not without certain constitutional restrictions that circumscribe its powers. The Legislature shall not pass any local or special laws covering the following cases:

1. The regulation of the jurisdiction and duties of justices of the peace and constables or the fixing of their compensation;
2. Punishments for crimes and misdemeanors;
3. The regulation of the practices of courts of justice;
4. Any changes in venue of civil or criminal cases;
5. The granting of divorces;
6. The changing of names of persons;
7. Vacating roads, town plots, streets, alleys, and public squares;
8. The summoning and impaneling of grand and petit juries and the provision for their compensation;
9. The regulation of county and township business;
10. The regulation of the election of county and township officers;
11. The assessment and collection of taxes for state, county, and township purposes;
12. The regulation of the opening and conducting of elections of state, county, or township officers, and the designation of places of voting;
13. The sale of real estate belonging to minors or other persons laboring under legal disabilities;
14. Giving effect to invalid deeds, wills, or other instruments;
15. Refunding money paid into the State Treasury or into the treasury of any county; or
16. The release of the indebtedness, liability, or obligation of any corporation, association, or person to the state or its subdivisions.⁶²

These restrictions, however, do not deny the power of the Legislature to establish and regulate the compensation and fees of certain county officers or to authorize and empower the boards of county commissioners of the various counties of the state to establish and regulate the compensation and fees of township officers. It is likewise permitted to establish and regulate the rates of freight, passage, toll, and charges of railroads, toll roads, ditch, flume, and tunnel companies incorporated under the laws of this state or doing business in the state.⁶³

In addition, the state's constitution prohibits the Legislature from levying a personal income tax or authorizing a state-operated lottery in Nevada.⁶⁴ It must establish a uniform system of county and township government throughout the state.⁶⁵ It may not abolish any county without the approval of the electors residing within the county's jurisdiction.⁶⁶

Individual freedoms, as enumerated in Article 1 of the *Nevada Constitution*, may not be abridged by the Legislature. These rights include such things as the freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly and prohibitions against bills of attainder, ex-post-facto laws, and laws infringing the obligation of contracts. The list is varied, but most of the rights spelled out in Article 1 of the *Nevada Constitution* are included in the *U.S. Constitution* and, hence, are doubly safeguarded from legislative encroachment.⁶⁷ The *Nevada Constitution* also sets a state debt limitation of 2 percent, exclusive of interest, of the assessed valuation of the state⁶⁸ and prohibits state assumption of the debts of any county, town, city, or other corporation, unless such debts have been incurred to repel invasion, suppress insurrection, or provide for the public defense.⁶⁹

The Nevada Legislature cannot exercise powers reserved by the *U.S. Constitution* to the federal government or those preempted by the Congress. The state cannot, for example, enter into a treaty, alliance, or confederation with a foreign nation; declare war; or, without the consent of the Congress, lay any impost or duties on imports or exports.⁷⁰ In some areas, however, the state and the federal government may exercise concurrent jurisdiction, and the Legislature, in these instances, may exercise its lawmaking powers.

The Legislature must provide a uniform rate of assessment and taxation throughout the state and may not permit a total tax levy in excess of \$0.05 on \$1 of assessed valuation. Consistent with this constitutional limitation, NRS 361.453 currently further limits the total ad valorem tax levy to not more than \$3.64 on each \$100 of assessed valuation with certain exceptions. In the case of mines and mining claims, only the net proceeds of minerals may be taxed. Personal property in interstate transit may not be taxed in Nevada, and the Legislature may not impose a state inheritance tax upon the inhabitants of the state. Business inventories are also exempt from taxation.⁷¹

Outside of these and a few other minor restrictions mentioned in the *Nevada Constitution*, the Legislature may enact any laws it deems necessary to

promote the general health, welfare, safety, or happiness of the people. Where the exercise of legislative prerogatives is questioned on constitutional grounds, it is within the purview of the courts to determine the legitimacy of any enactment. Until the courts have decided a question, there is a presumption of validity that adheres to all legislative acts.

Crimes Against the Legislative Power

It is unlawful in Nevada to interfere with the legislative process without lawful authority. Disrupting proceedings; defacing official documents or records of the Legislature; withholding, altering, or destroying property owned or used by the Legislature; remaining in the Legislative Chambers or Building after being asked to leave pursuant to the law or rule of the Legislature; coercing or attempting to coerce any legislative member or employee to perform any official act or to refrain from doing so; and possessing firearms, explosives, dangerous devices, or deadly weapons in the Legislative Building all constitute unlawful interferences with the legislative process and are punishable as gross misdemeanors.⁷² Similarly, it is a gross misdemeanor to refuse to testify or produce documents when summoned to appear before either house or any legislative committee.⁷³ It is a misdemeanor to misrepresent any fact knowingly when testifying or otherwise communicating to a legislator, though witnesses are absolutely privileged to publish defamatory material that is relevant to a proceeding.⁷⁴

It is a felony to alter legislative measures or enrolled bills or resolutions with fraudulent intent. Conviction may result in imprisonment in the state prison for a minimum term of not less than one year and a maximum term of not more than four years. The court may also impose a fine of not more than \$5,000.⁷⁵

As mentioned earlier under the section entitled “Lobbyists,” anyone offering or giving a bribe or threatening a legislator to influence a vote or to be absent from the house of which the legislator is a member or any committee of the Legislature must, under the law, be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for a minimum term of not less than one year and a maximum term of not more than five years. The court may also impose a fine of not more than \$10,000.⁷⁶ Any legislator asking for or receiving a bribe is liable to the same penalty.⁷⁷

In addition to these penalties, either house may imprison nonmembers for disorderly or contemptuous behavior in its presence. Such punishment, however, may not extend beyond the final adjournment of the session.⁷⁸

Contracts in Which a Legislator Has an Interest

A legislator shall not become a named contractor or named subcontractor under any contract or order for supplies for the state or any of its departments, or for the Legislature or either house, if the contract or order is paid for in whole or in part by

money appropriated by the Legislature of which that legislator is a member.⁷⁹ Further, a legislator shall not be interested, directly or indirectly, as a principal, in any such contract.⁸⁰ Finally, a legislator shall not be interested in any contract made by the Legislature of which that legislator is a member, or to be a purchaser or interested in any purchase or sale made by the Legislature of which that legislator is a member.⁸¹

Despite the general prohibitions stated above, Nevada law provides that a legislator may sell or enter into a contract to sell, to the state or any of its departments, any item, commodity, service, or capital improvement, if the sources of supply are limited; the contracting process is controlled by rules of open competitive bidding; and the legislator has not taken part in developing the contract or sale plans or specifications and will not be personally involved in opening, considering, or accepting any bids for the sale or contract. Under these same conditions, an exception is provided to the general rule stipulating that a public officer (including a legislator) or employee shall not bid on or enter into a contract between any state or local agency and any business entity in which the public officer or employee has a significant pecuniary interest.⁸²

In addition, any legislator may, if not named in a contract, receive, as direct salary or wages, compensation for which the original source was a legislative appropriation to any governmental entity or a private entity not owned or controlled by the legislator. Finally, the law provides that any legislator may receive, for services as an instructor or teacher from any county school district or the Nevada System of Higher Education, compensation for which the original source was a legislative appropriation to any governmental entity or a private entity not owned or controlled by the legislator.⁸³ The statute provides that a legislator who violates the provisions concerning prohibited interests in a contract is guilty of a gross misdemeanor and forfeits his or her office.⁸⁴

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The ethical conduct of legislators falls under the jurisdiction of the house of which the legislator is a member for those actions taken within the sphere of legitimate legislative activity (e.g., disclosure, voting and abstention, et cetera) and under the jurisdiction of Nevada's Commission on Ethics for conduct that falls outside the sphere of legitimate legislative activity. *Nevada Revised Statutes* also provides certain requirements and limitations on the conduct of a legislator.

Meanwhile, Rule 23 of the Senate Standing Rules and Rule 23 of the Assembly Standing Rules provide for the creation of a Committee on Ethics in each house which is charged with hearing requests for advice or complaints brought by members of the Senate or Assembly or others on questions of potential breaches of ethics and conflicts of interest. Except under specific circumstances, all proceedings held by the Committee on Ethics to consider the character, alleged misconduct, professional competence, or physical or mental health of any person on matters of ethics or conflicts of interest are confidential. Both standing rules further set forth the parameters under which a conflict of interest by a legislator is determined and stipulate that if a conflict of interest exists

with a legislative matter, the legislator shall make a general disclosure of the conflict on the record during a committee meeting or on the floor of the Senate or Assembly, as applicable. The disclosure must be entered into the appropriate committee minutes or journal for the Senate or Assembly. The legislator is not required to make that general disclosure at length again regarding the same conflict of interest when the matter in question arises on subsequent occasions during the same session; instead, the legislator may make reference on the record to the previous disclosure.⁸⁵

Rule 23 of the Senate Standing Rules and Rule 23 of the Assembly Standing Rules also set forth parameters under which an abstention in voting may be made by a legislator. To determine whether to abstain from voting upon, advocating, or opposing a matter about which a legislator has a conflict of interest, the legislator should consider whether: (1) the conflict impedes the legislator's independence of judgment; and (2) the legislator's interest is greater than the interests of an entire class of persons similarly situated.⁸⁶ Finally, the rules specify that if a legislator who is a member of a committee declares on the record when a vote is to be taken by the committee that he or she will abstain, the quorum to act upon and the number of votes necessary to act upon the matter is reduced as though the legislator abstaining were not a member of the committee.⁸⁷

Legislative Code of Ethical Standards

In 2017, the Legislature amended the Joint Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly to establish ethical standards to regulate the behavior and conduct of persons who participate in the legislative process and to prohibit and sanction ethical breaches. The Legislature amended its joint rules to allow a complaint to be brought when prohibited conduct is committed based on or because of the gender or other protected category of a person. Lobbyists are also subject to these provisions. The Legislative Counsel Bureau was tasked with establishing a reporting system to allow submission of a complaint.⁸⁸

Reporting of Contributions and Campaign Expenses

Every legislator is required to submit to the Secretary of State reports of contributions and campaign expenses. For specific information about the requirements and deadlines for these reports, please contact the Elections Division of the Office of Secretary of State at (775) 684-5705 or refer to the *Campaign Guide*, which is published by the Secretary of State and can be found at the Secretary of State's website: <https://nvsos.gov/>.

Nevada Revised Statutes 294A.160 prohibits the expenditure of money received as a campaign contribution for a candidate's personal use. It also limits the disposition of unspent contributions. *Nevada Revised Statutes* 294A.365 requires the reporting of the manner in which the unspent contributions are disposed. Further, for any campaign expenditure made using a credit or debit card, a candidate must itemize each transaction and identify the entity from whom the purchase was made.

Financial Disclosure

Every candidate for the Legislature is required to file financial disclosure statements with the Secretary of State. Such statements must be filed no later than the tenth day after the last day to qualify as a candidate for the office and then once a year thereafter, including the year that the term expires, on or before January 15 of each year.⁸⁹ The Secretary of State is required to retain the statements for six years.⁹⁰

Under the law, financial disclosure statements are required to contain the following information concerning the candidate:

1. The candidate's length of residence in Nevada and the legislative district in which the candidate is registered to vote;
2. Sources of income of the candidate, or that of any adult member of the candidate's household;
3. Real estate holdings other than a personal residence valued at \$2,500 or more that is located in Nevada or an adjacent state;
4. Specified creditors to whom the candidate or a member of the candidate's household owe \$5,000 or more;
5. Attendance at certain educational or informational meetings, events, or trips;
6. Gifts received by the candidate with an aggregate value in excess of \$200 from a donor; and
7. A list of all business entities in which the candidate or a member of the candidate's household is involved as a trustee, beneficiary, director, officer, owner, partner, or shareholder of 1 percent or more of the total outstanding stock or securities issued by the business entity.⁹¹

A legislator who fails to file a financial disclosure statement in a timely manner is subject to a civil penalty and payment of court costs and attorney's fees.⁹²

FINANCIAL OPERATION OF THE LEGISLATURE

Legislative Fund

During each legislative session, the Legislature appropriates monies from the State General Fund to pay for the cost of the session and the activities of the Legislative Counsel Bureau. These appropriations are deposited in the Legislative Fund.⁹³ The expenses paid from the Legislative Fund include legislator and staff salaries, travel expenses of both legislators and staff, and operating and capital costs of the Legislature and the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Legislator Compensation and Allowances

Legislators are paid a salary for the first 60 days of a regular session and for up to 20 days of a special session. Under NRS 218A.630, the minimum daily salary

for legislators is \$130. For legislators elected on or after November 8, 2006, the compensation of the office of the senator or Assembly member is increased by an amount equal to the cumulative percentage increase in the salaries of the classified employees of the state during the immediately preceding term of that office.⁹⁴

Legislators receive additional payments for their travel and per diem during a legislative session. The per diem, which is intended to cover the legislator's lodging, meals, and incidental expenses, is equal to the federal rate for the Carson City area, which is currently \$149. This per diem amount is paid each day that the Legislature is in session. Costs associated with travel during a session (moving expenses, housing and furniture rental, and travel related to legislative business) are reimbursed, subject to an overall limit of \$10,000 during a regular session and \$1,200 during a special session.⁹⁵

For travel to and from Carson City for the legislative session, a pre-session orientation conference, or a training session, each legislator is entitled to per diem plus reimbursement of actual travel expenses. Each legislator whose permanent residence is more than 50 miles from Carson City, and who enters into a lease or other agreement for housing during session, is also entitled to a supplemental housing allowance during the session. This allowance is equal to the fair market rent for a one bedroom unit in Carson City, as published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Fiscal Year 2019 rate for the Carson City area is \$679 per month.⁹⁶

In addition to these amounts, each legislator is entitled to a communications allowance of \$2,800 and a postage allowance of \$60.⁹⁷ Legislators who are chairs of standing committees or hold leadership positions are entitled to an additional \$900 allowance.⁹⁸ Each member also is entitled to a certain number of business cards, sheets of stationery, and envelopes from the State Printing Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.⁹⁹ The Speaker of the Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor (President of the Senate) receive an additional \$2 per day during the time of their actual attendance as presiding officers.¹⁰⁰

When the Legislature is not in session, each senator and Assembly member is entitled to receive a salary and the per diem allowance and travel expenses provided by law for each day of attendance at a conference, training session, meeting, seminar, or other gathering at which the legislator officially represents the State of Nevada or its Legislature. This applies to in-state travel only. The salary varies depending on the activity but does not exceed the amount provided by law.¹⁰¹

Legislators' Retirement

Members of the Nevada Legislature may choose to participate in the Legislators' Retirement System. During a regular session, 15 percent of each legislator's gross compensation is withheld as a contribution to the retirement plan. The state's contribution is made from the Legislative Fund based on the recommendation of a consulting actuary. The minimum requirement for retirement with monthly benefits

for membership prior to July 1, 2015, is ten years of accredited service at the age of 60 years. The requirement for membership after July 1, 2015, is ten years of service at the age of 60 years. A lapse in service as a legislator is not just cause for forfeiture of any retirement rights accrued prior to such lapse.

A legislator entering into retirement receives a monthly retirement allowance of \$25 for each year of service up to 30 years, with fractions of years prorated. This allowance is subject to the same cost-of-living increase received by the retirees and beneficiaries of the Public Employees' Retirement System.

The Legislators' Retirement System permits survivor benefits for a legislator's dependents; allows several conversion options to be exercised by a legislator at the time of retirement; permits purchase of previous creditable service performed in the Legislature, if such service was performed prior to the creation of the system; allows purchase of up to five years of out-of-state service performed with any federal, state, county, or municipal public system, if that service is no longer creditable in the other system; and provides for coordination with other retirement systems. All of the provisions relating to legislative retirement are specified in the Legislators' Retirement Law.¹⁰²

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

- ¹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 1.
- ² *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 3, Sec. 1.
- ³ William J. Keefe and Morris S. Ogul, *The American Legislative Process: Congress and The States*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 2.
- ⁴ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 15, Sec. 6.
- ⁵ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 5.
- ⁶ Appendix to Chapter 218B of *Nevada Revised Statutes*, pages 218B-71 to 218B-162. The *Nevada Revised Statutes* are hereinafter cited as NRS.
- ⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 5.
- ⁸ *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964); *Lucas v. 44th General Assembly of Colorado*, 377 U.S. 713 (1964); and related cases.
- ⁹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 5.
- ¹⁰ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Secs. 3 and 4.
- ¹¹ *Secretary of State v. Burk*, 124 Nev. 579, 188 P.3d 1112; *Child v. Lomax*, 124 Nev. 600, 188 P.3d 1103.
- ¹² *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Secs. 3 and 4; *Child v. Lomax*, 124 Nev. Adv. Op. 57 (2008).
- ¹³ NRS 218A.200, 281.050, 293.177, and 293.181.
- ¹⁴ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 6.
- ¹⁵ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 9.
- ¹⁶ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 10.
- ¹⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 8.
- ¹⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 12; NRS 218A.250 and 218A.260.
- ¹⁹ *Id.*
- ²⁰ NRS 218A.510, *et seq.*, Senate Standing Rule 3, Assembly Standing Rule 3, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ²¹ Chapter 218H of NRS.
- ²² NRS 218A.915.
- ²³ NRS 198.010.
- ²⁴ NRS 218E.085.
- ²⁵ NRS 218A.960 and 218A.965.
- ²⁶ Senate Standing Rule 94, Assembly Standing Rule 94, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ²⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 1.
- ²⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 23.
- ²⁹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 9, Sec. 2; Art. 10, Sec. 1.
- ³⁰ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 19.
- ³¹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 16, Sec. 1; *United States Constitution*, Art. 5.
- ³² *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 19, Sec. 2.
- ³³ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 11, Sec. 4.
- ³⁴ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 11, Sec. 5.
- ³⁵ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 25.
- ³⁶ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 32.
- ³⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Secs. 28 and 33.
- ³⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 15, Sec. 9.
- ³⁹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 6, Sec. 15.

- ⁴⁰ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 32.
- ⁴¹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 5, Sec. 4; NRS 293.400.
- ⁴² *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 7, Secs. 1 and 2.
- ⁴³ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 5, Sec. 13.
- ⁴⁴ NRS 353.230.
- ⁴⁵ NRS 218G.010, *et seq.*
- ⁴⁶ Chapter 233B of NRS.
- ⁴⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 2.
- ⁴⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 5, Sec. 9.
- ⁴⁹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 2A.
- ⁵⁰ Senate Standing Rule 43, Assembly Standing Rule 55, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵¹ Senate Standing Rule 53, Assembly Standing Rule 42, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵² Senate Standing Rule 46, Assembly Standing Rule 45, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵³ Joint Rule 1, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵⁴ Joint Rule 7, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵⁵ Senate Standing Rule 12, Assembly Standing Rule 10, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵⁶ For example, see: Legislative Commission (NRS 218E.150); Interim Finance Committee (NRS 218E.400); or Committees on Health Care (NRS 439B.200), High-Level Radioactive Waste (NRS 459.0085), or Public Lands (NRS 218E.510).
- ⁵⁷ Joint Rule 7, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁵⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 11.
- ⁵⁹ NRS 218A.440.
- ⁶⁰ NRS 218A.300.
- ⁶¹ NRS 218A.310.
- ⁶² *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 20.
- ⁶³ *Id.*
- ⁶⁴ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 24 and Art. 10, Sec. 1.
- ⁶⁵ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 25.
- ⁶⁶ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 36.
- ⁶⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 1, Secs. 1 through 20.
- ⁶⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 9, Sec. 3.
- ⁶⁹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 9, Sec. 4.
- ⁷⁰ *U.S. Constitution*, Art. 1, Secs. 8 and 10; and various amendments to the *U.S. Constitution*, particularly the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.
- ⁷¹ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 10, Secs. 1, 2, and 5.
- ⁷² NRS 218A.905 and 218A.915.
- ⁷³ NRS 218E.095.
- ⁷⁴ NRS 218E.085.
- ⁷⁵ NRS 218A.950 and 218A.955.
- ⁷⁶ NRS 218A.960.
- ⁷⁷ NRS 218A.965.
- ⁷⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 7.

- ⁷⁹ NRS 218A.970.
- ⁸⁰ Id.
- ⁸¹ Id.
- ⁸² Id.
- ⁸³ Id.
- ⁸⁴ Id.
- ⁸⁵ Senate Standing Rule 23, Assembly Standing Rule 23, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁸⁶ Senate Standing Rule 23, Assembly Standing Rule 23, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁸⁷ Senate Standing Rule 23, Assembly Standing Rule 23, *Standing Rules of the Senate and Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁸⁸ Joint Rules 30-39, *Standing Rules of the Senate and the Assembly*, Nevada Legislature, 79th Session, 2017.
- ⁸⁹ NRS 281.561.
- ⁹⁰ NRS 281.573.
- ⁹¹ NRS 281.571.
- ⁹² NRS 281.581.
- ⁹³ NRS 218A.150.
- ⁹⁴ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 33; and NRS 218A.630.
- ⁹⁵ NRS 218A.645.
- ⁹⁶ Id.
- ⁹⁷ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 33; and NRS 218A.645.
- ⁹⁸ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 33; and NRS 218A.665.
- ⁹⁹ NRS 218A.670.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Nevada Constitution*, Art. 4, Sec. 33.
- ¹⁰¹ NRS 218A.635.
- ¹⁰² Chapter 218C of NRS.