

Nevada Youth Legislature: *Annual Report* 2014-2015



Submitted by:
Rose Asaf, Chair
2014-2015
Nevada Youth Legislature

Overview

The 2014-2015 year, which can be characterized by expansion and experience, was the second year of the inaugural two-year term for the Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL). The successes of the 2014-2015 year validate the benefits that come from Youth Legislators serving two-year terms. Youth Legislators expanded their understanding of the legislative process by taking an active part in it. Youth Legislators, fully representing their respective districts, reached out to their constituents through town hall meetings and their own District Youth Advisory Councils, and gained insight into the issues that are faced by the young people of Nevada. Then, with a more knowledgeable awareness of the problems that matter to the young people from Nevada's twenty-one districts, Youth Legislators drafted their Bill Draft Requests (BDR) according to the needs and wants of their constituents.

The NYL is allocated one BDR per legislative session. The BDR selected by Youth Legislators became SB 464, which provides medical amnesty for underage drinkers who seek medical attention. In addition, another BDR was sponsored by a Youth Legislators's Senator (Senator Joyce Woodhouse) and was presented as SB 220, which addresses financial literacy education in public schools. The NYL's bill, SB 464, has successfully passed both houses and now awaits Governor Brian Sandoval's signature. Because SB 220 includes a fiscal note, it has been exempt from official deadlines and proceeds to make its way through the legislative process.

Altogether, the 2014-2015 year enabled Youth Legislators to empower the young people of Nevada through legislation while also providing Youth Legislators with an unparalleled education with matters relating to Nevada's legislative process. Youth Legislators, dedicated to listening to their constituents, have a greater grasp of the meaning of public service. Overall, the 2014-2015 year has been both valuable and productive for both Nevada Youth Legislature and our state's young people.

2014 Fall Training

On Saturday, September 6, 2014, the NYL conducted an off-year one day training for all twenty-one Youth Legislators. (The full training is held in August of legislative session years). The day began with a Pre-Training Family Orientation on the Youth Legislature led by Senator Valerie Wiener (Ret.), Chair of the NYL Foundation Board, David Byerman, NYL Executive Director, and Melanie Thompson, mother of two incumbent Youth Legislators, George and Megan Thompson. Before welcoming Youth Legislators to the 2014-2015 year, providing a brief overview of the Nevada Youth Legislature and delivering special announcements, Senator Wiener and Mr. Byerman introduced Nevada Supreme Court Justice Michael Cherry, who swore in two new members of the NYL.

The official training began with “The Role of Lobbyists in the Legislative Process” led by Senator Wiener moderating the program and a panel including: Constance Brooks, Vice Chancellor, Government and Community Affairs, NSHE; Russel Rowe, owner of Griffin Rowe, a Nevada lobbying firm; and Nick Vassiliadis, GPA Associate of R&R Partners, a Nevada lobbying firm.

After fully engaging with the panel, Youth Legislators then communicated via videoconference with Risa Lang, Chief Deputy Legislative Counsel, and Karly O’Krent, Deputy Legislative Counsel, who both detailed the process a bill must undergo to become law. Timothy Taycher, NYL Program Coordinator, detailed the history of the legislation proposed by the NYL and prepared Youth Legislators for the 2015 legislative session. After his presentation, the NYL received a video message from New Jersey from Former NYL Chair Zhan Okuda-Lim, a Princeton University senior, who spoke to current Youth Legislators about his experiences with the program.

Additionally, the Youth Legislators were split into BDR workgroups in which they spoke with NYL Alumni about ideas for the Youth Legislator’s upcoming BDR proposals. After closing remarks by Senator Wiener and Mr. Byerman, the 2014 fall training culminated with NYL traditional carrot cake and adjournment.

2014-2015 NYL Meetings

October 27, 2014

Youth Legislators convened for the election of Chair, Vice Chair, and, for the first time, Chair Pro Tempore. Youth Legislator Mitchell Ragan was elected as the NYL's first Chair Pro Tempore; Youth Legislator Katherine Krolicki was elected NYL Vice Chair; and Youth Legislator Rose Asaf was elected NYL Chair. Senator Wiener shared information about the NYL Foundation Board and Alex Bybee, former NYL Chair and current member of the NYL Foundation Board, updated Youth Legislators on NYL Alumni Activities. Mr. Byerman then led the Youth Legislators's in a discussion about potential legislation sponsored by the NYL for the 2015 legislative session. After public comment, the meeting was adjourned by newly elected Chair Asaf, and Youth Legislators went off with a task in mind: coming up with their own ideas for an NYL BDR.

October 28, 2014

Youth Legislators focused primarily on narrowing down the twenty-one BDRs proposed by each Youth Legislator to seven BDRs and then to two BDRs, which were to be scheduled for full hearings at the November meeting. This issue-narrowing process required the active participation of each Youth Legislator, who analyzed and scrutinized the intent, reasoning, and purpose of each BDR. After each Youth Legislator provided a brief synopsis of her or his BDR, the twenty-one BDRs were then narrowed to seven BDRs by vote. The remaining seven BDRs were then subject to the keen analysis of the Youth Legislators, providing for a lively debate amongst the members of the body. After much discussion and a vote, two BDRs, one proposed by Youth Legislator Asaf and another by Youth Legislator Gong, were selected to receive full hearings by their proposers at the NYL's next meeting.

November 12, 2014

Between the October 28th and November 12th meetings, Youth Legislators Asaf and Gong spent much time and effort lining up witnesses and preparing testimony for the full hearings of their BDRs.

The first BDR heard was proposed by Youth Legislator Asaf, providing immunity from prosecution for a person under 21 years of age who requests emergency medical assistance in response to possible alcohol overdose and: (1) remains on the scene until medical assistance arrives; and (2) cooperates with medical assistance and law enforcement personnel. After Youth Legislator Asaf's opening remarks, she called forth her first witness, Kim Caipa, a mother tragically affected by the hazards of irresponsible teenage drinking and the fear of making lifesaving calls. Once Ms. Caipa finished her testimony, which shed light on the applications of the proposed legislation, Stacy Woodbury, Executive Director of the Nevada State Medical Association, testified on the medical community's role in saving the lives of underage drinkers. In addition, she provided statistics about the underage fatalities that were directly caused by teenage drinking, which could have been prevented if medical assistance had been sought.

Former Assemblyman Dr. Andy Eisen testified on the legislative aspect of the proposed BDR. After Dr. Eisen's testimony, Quinn Jonas, Senator of the College of Liberal Arts for the Associated Students of the University of Nevada, Reno, conveyed the importance of medical amnesty legislation on college campuses in Nevada. Following him was Aaron Letzeiser, founder of the Medical Amnesty Initiative, who testified on behalf of the vast success similar legislation has had in other states.

After the hearing on Youth Legislator Asaf's BDR, Youth Legislator Gong testified presented his BDR, which requires the State Board of Education to revise mathematics curriculum in grades 6-12 to integrate age-appropriate financial literacy instruction. Youth Legislator Gong provided insightful opening remarks on the importance of financial literacy in the education system. Supporting this measure, former State Senator Allison Copening spoke of a similar bill she sponsored in 2011, SB 317. SB 317 set the premise of financial literacy, and she commended Youth Legislator Gong on positively expanding the scope of her bill.

Terri Janison with United Way of Southern Nevada testified in support of the BDR. United Way is an organization that focuses on health, education, and financial stability. United Way's goal is to make families more stable so they do not have to rely on social services. Mrs. Janison said that the BDR would benefit families in Nevada. Dale Erquiaga, superintendent of the Nevada Department of Education, then testified on behalf of the State Board and the Nevada Department of Education. However, he suggested that the language be revised to replace the word "curriculum" to the word "standards." Youth Legislator Kyle Walker, having proposed a BDR similar to Youth Legislator Gong's, then discussed, from another perspective, the significance and indispensability of financial literacy. His testimony was followed by Youth Legislator Gong's closing remarks.

After the discussion of both BDRs, the NYL voted to support the BDR calling for medical amnesty legislation, sponsored by Youth Legislator Asaf.

NYL Reunion, January 3, 2015

The NYL hosted a gathering for alumni of the program and current Youth Legislators. The reunion took place both at the Nevada State Legislative Building in Carson City and at the Grant Sawyer Building in Las Vegas in order to allow those both in Northern and Southern Nevada to attend. Many former and current Youth Legislators attended, and each briefly synopsisized how the NYL how personally impacted her or him. After that, current and former Youth Legislators were given the opportunity to socialize and exchange information, thus expanding the network of current and former Youth Legislators and the impact of the NYL program. The reunion concluded with the traditional NYL carrot cake.

January 8, 2015

The focus of this meeting, the last official in-person meeting of the NYL, involved the review of the NYL's BDR. After Senator Wiener updated the Youth Legislators on activities of the NYL, a legislative panel provided Youth Legislators with advice on how to testify before legislative committees. The panel included Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senator James Settelmeyer, Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, Assemblyman Lynn Stewart, Assemblyman James Oscarson, and Assemblyman Pat Hickey. The information they provided was very useful for Youth Legislators who were beginning to prepare testimony for the NYL's bill.

After the panel presentation, Youth Legislators began the long discussion on their BDR—BDR 15-651 (medical amnesty). Youth Legislators actively engaged in a cordial debate regarding the provisions set forth by BDR 15-651. Concerns were addressed, and language was therefore amended. At the end of the discussion, all Youth Legislators were satisfied with the proposed language for the NYL's bill. Before adjourning the meeting, the members of the NYL shared their thoughts and comments on their experience in the NYL.

Nevada Youth Legislators' Day in the Legislature, March 30, 2015

Youth Legislators Asaf, Gong, Walker, and Ragan, accompanied by Senator Wiener, travelled to Carson City and were joined by Northern Youth Legislators Madeleine Welch, Kella Kantor, Krolicki, Scott Sax, and Lucas Bickford. Youth Legislator Asaf, the proposer of SB 464, the NYL's official bill, spent the prior months lining up witnesses and writing testimony in preparation for this day. The morning began with a brief presentation before the Assembly Judiciary Committee, which was graciously permitted by Chairman Hansen. The presentation was an abridged version of the official hearing assembled by the NYL and included Chair Asaf's remarks, the full testimony of Ms. Caipa, and a synopsis of the process of selection SB 464 given by Youth Legislator Welch.

Following the presentation before the Assembly Judiciary Committee, Youth Legislators extended their advocacy, making their way through the Nevada State Legislative Building, speaking with lawmakers about their legislation. Youth Legislators were also recognized during the Senate Floor Session. During a traditional lunch at Reds 395 Grill, Youth Legislators heard from Assembly Leaders.

In the afternoon, Youth Legislators Asaf and Krolicki sat before the Senate Judiciary Committee to give a full hearing on SB 464. After their opening remarks, many witnesses appeared at the witness table to support of SB 464. Those in support included the Medical Amnesty Initiative, the Public Defenders, the District Attorneys, Nevada Law Enforcement, the ACLU, the Nevada State Medical Association, students from the University of Nevada, Reno, and members of the public. No one testified against or neutral on the measure.

After the hearing, Youth Legislators met in the Assembly Caucus Room with Assembly Speaker John Hambrick during which time they had a lively exchange over traditional NYL carrot cake.

Update on SB 464

SB 464 passed unanimously out of the Senate Judiciary Committee with an amendment, imposing a general ban on powdered alcohol. SB 464, as amended, then passed unanimously out of the Senate. The Assembly Judiciary Committee conducted a formal hearing on SB 464 and passed the measure out of committee, 12-1. The final Assembly vote for passage on SB 464 was 34-8. The bill was then transmitted to Governor Sandoval for signature.

Update on SB 220

As of the writing of this report, no final decisions have been made on SB 220.

May 22, 2015 (teleconference)

In this brief meeting via teleconference, Chair Asaf provided the members on the call with a brief recap of the day at the legislature. Caitlin Brady, LCB research analyst, then updated the NYL on the status of SB 464 and SB 220. Her update was followed by remarks from Senator Wiener. Youth Legislators on the call then shared their final thoughts and remarks about their time as Youth Legislators. Senator Wiener ended the call with information about how to stay involved with the NYL.

Submitted by:

Rose Asaf, Chair
2014-2015
Nevada Youth Legislature