

## An Open Letter to Nevada Parent, School, and Business Communities

The Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB) represents the State's 107 elected school board members from seventeen school districts who are, in turn, responsible for more than 425,000 students in Nevada. Some districts are large while some are small, some employ thousands of teachers while others employ only a few dozen, and some provide services to children living in remote, isolated areas while others provide services to children living in highly populated urban areas. In spite of these differences, all of the State's school board members are dedicated to working with their communities toward one goal: to advance the best interests of children, establishing schools where the futures of all children are driven by their aspirations and not bounded by their circumstances.

This goal has been difficult for school board members to advance in recent days due to the \$95 million in budget cuts demanded by Governor Gibbons. The Association opposes any reduction of resources that inevitably leads to a negative impact on students' education, district services, academics, or the active participation of students and their families. Such budget cuts produce a range of undesirable impacts that school board members most fear.

It is simply wrong to cut K-12 public education. Not only is it wrong, but based upon experience from cuts in the 1990s and again in 2000-2001, Nevada's seventeen school districts seldom, if ever, recover from such reductions in per-pupil funding, which negatively continue to impact students and staff for decades.

We know that our level of per-pupil funding as determined by the Legislature is consistently among the lowest levels on national lists of dollars appropriated by the state to support schools. Our statewide funding average is currently \$5,122 per child. Some districts receive more than that amount while others receive less. Clark County School District, for example, receives \$4,891. These cuts will likely reduce this year's funding by about \$60 per pupil across the State. These budget cuts further set us back.

In addition to the reduction in the guaranteed per pupil amount, the Governor's recommendation includes deferring new programs for expanded full-day kindergarten, empowerment, gifted and talented, remediation and innovation, career and technical education, educational technology, pay for performance, and other opportunities to further promote achievement for students in Nevada's schools. All of these are initiatives designed to

improve student achievement. Legislators, the business community, parents, school board members, superintendents, and others fought hard to fund these programs that now are “deferred.”

The Association and its school board members urge the Nevada Legislature and Governor Gibbons to make lemonade out of the lemons we have received during this process.

First, NASB strongly encourages the Nevada Legislature and Governor Gibbons to work together to establish consistent and appropriate revenue streams that will stabilize the funding of K-12 public education in Nevada at sufficient levels to ensure the success and achievement of all of the State’s children.

Second, now that it is apparent that the guaranteed per-pupil funding as established by the 2007 Legislature will be reduced by the Governor's budget cuts, calculations for the next Biennium's guaranteed per-pupil funding must be based on amounts prior to all cuts in the per-pupil funding.

Lastly, NASB recommends the Nevada Legislature establish an account in which ALL local school support taxes collected in the name of K-12 public education will be held in reserve without reverting to the General Fund in order to offset any future shortfalls that may impact public education. Doing this will allow Nevada to honor its per-pupil "guarantee," without imposing cuts on K-12 public education.

We encourage each of you to become involved in the discussion and debate about budget cuts to be made in your local school district and to join us in advocating for the three recommendations above. By standing together, we can work now to change the course of the future—so that budget cuts do not ever again impact the children in our schools.

## **Sharla Hales**

President

Nevada Association of School Boards

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[For questions or further information, please telephone Ms. Hales at 775/450-5046.]