



## **Nevada Association of School Boards**

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***Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership***

January 8, 2010

The Honorable Jim Gibbons  
Governor of the State of Nevada  
State Capitol  
101 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Governor Gibbons:

We have read with great interest the press release from your office on January 6, 2010. Your proposals involve extremely high stakes for all of Nevada's children. We are committed to thoroughly studying your proposals to provide both you and legislators with the perspectives of local school board trustees who, as you know, make the policy decisions at the local level.

As school trustees, we seek to make decisions that are collaborative as well as data and research driven. As a result, we are consistently attentive to the data and research that can be provided to us before we make policy decisions on behalf of the children and schools that we serve. Your press release contains various assertions about these several reform proposals; however, we respectfully request that you provide the data and research or "best practices" that will support each of the recommendations that you have made. We look forward to receiving this information as it will help us more effectively evaluate each of your reform proposals.

On one of your specific recommendations regarding elimination of the hold harmless clause, we want you to know that doing this would create planning and budgeting chaos for each of the seventeen school districts. Our research on this issue demonstrates that the hold harmless clause is needed for all seventeen school districts to continue their fiscal responsibility. We urge you not to change the hold harmless clause. During times of unanticipated enrollment drops, the hold harmless provision functions to protect instructional programs for students, including jobs for

C: Senator Steven A. Horsford  
Senator William J. Raggio  
Senator Joyce Woodhouse  
Senator Valerie Wiener  
Dr. Walt Rulfes, President—Nevada Association of School Superintendents

Speaker Barbara Buckley  
Assemblywoman Heidi Gansert  
Assemblywoman Debbie Smith  
Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell

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their teachers, and to continue necessary district operations. In turn, this provides a period of time during which school boards solicit input from their community and staff that results in a more thoughtful and long-term fiscally responsible response to the situation. Because existing statutes do not enable school districts to build and maintain an adequate ending fund balance which is sheltered from the collective bargaining process, hold harmless acts as a mechanism for districts to have a temporary "rainy day fund" of sorts. From the school board perspective, this is an important aspect of sound financial management.

We stand in strong support of your recommendation to repeal the language currently in NRS 386.650 that prevents the use of student assessment results in teacher/staff evaluation. We have repeatedly testified in support of this statutory amendment in recent legislative hearings and have worked with legislators behind the scenes since the statute was enacted to seek removal of this prohibition.

We call on you to avoid any significant reduction in K-12 funding. Even assuming that reforms are implemented, further budget cuts will hurt student achievement. At a time when we need to improve education to ensure Nevada's present and future economic growth, further reducing support for education seems to ensure that improvements cannot be made.

We reiterate our commitment to investing time and resources to analyze your proposals; however, we invite you to include us earlier in your considerations as you go forward. As elected officials responsible for K-12 public education in Nevada school districts, we would have appreciated being involved in your considerations prior to the time that these recommendations were introduced.

We look forward to receiving the data and research requested above as well as to working with you and members of the Nevada Legislature on all issues related to K-12 public education and the boys and girls who are served by all of our schools across the State.

Sincerely,

*Jim Lemaire*

Jim Lemaire  
NASB President  
Member, Carson City School District Board of Trustees