

Vision & Voices

NEVADA WOMEN'S LOBBY A VOICE FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

The Organization Dealing with Issues Concerning Women, Children and Families

THE "G" WORD IN NEVADA

Growth in Nevada has been a hot topic for years and from all projections it won't be cooling off any time soon. Nevada's population is expected to swell by 59 percent in the next 20 years, growing from 2.3 million in 2003 to 3.6 million by 2024, according to state demographer Jeff Hardcastle.

Since 1986, Clark County has been one of the fastest growing areas in the nation, and a current U.S. Census report ranked North Las Vegas and Henderson as the second and third fastest growing of U.S. cities with 100,000 or more residents (April 2000 to July 2003). Hardcastle projects that northwestern Nevada will grow by 179,000 by 2024, while rural Nevada may see a drop in population.

This growth has been the reflection of a favorable job market, a fairly stable economy, low individual taxes and a good climate.

But Nevadans who have been here for a while are also aware of some of the costs of this growth.

- Our desert climate with a very low annual rainfall and several years of drought is stretching our water resources to the maximum.
- Residents wonder every school year if enough new teachers will be hired in time for all the new schools built to accommodate growth.
- Nevada's safety net for social services is underfunded and is full of holes.
- Housing costs are escalating due to the high cost of supplying water and the limited availability of land for development. (In Nevada the federal government owns 86% of the land.)

GROWTH & NEVADA FAMILIES

Considering the 59% growth projected for Nevada by 2024, the already severely strained state budget, and recent federal cuts in education, health and social services funding, impacts on families in our state will be dramatic.

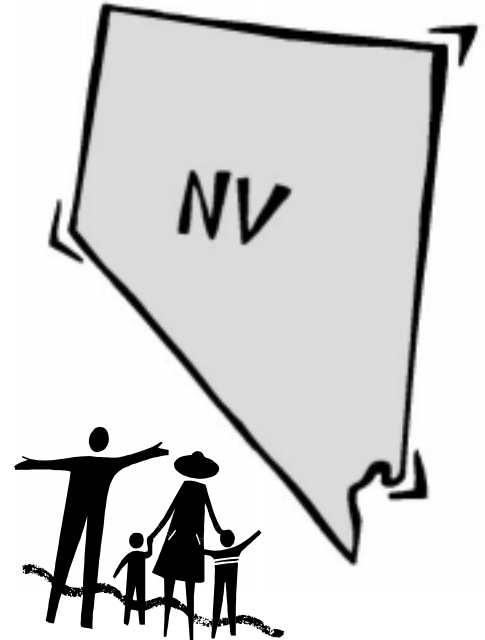
Where will our children go to school and what kind of education will these children receive? Where will they go for higher education and will it be affordable? Will we, as a state, be able to provide adequate and affordable health care for our senior citizens and our children as well as our working families? Where are these people going to live as they come to Nevada in such huge numbers? These are just a few of the questions we must ask about the "G" word.

Nevada's social services are underfunded, under-staffed and over-worked.

As a state we struggle to fund the rudimentary services required to maintain our population and insure some sort of safety net for those less fortunate who are not able to be self-sustaining in our community. Through many legislative sessions we watched as community services needed to maintain a good quality of life were cut from the budget or under-funded. Nevada rated a grade of D- in taking care of the children in our state (Nevada Children's Legislative Report Card, Children's Advocacy Alliance, 2002 data).

Our last legislative session was followed by two special sessions and was probably the most contentious NWL has seen during our eight sessions of lobbying. And this was all about funding a budget that was not excessive, providing barely adequate funding for most budget items that affect children and families. The necessary tax increases were argued about, bandied about and everyone was crying "don't tax me--tax the other guy." Arguments and legal challenges continue regarding tax increases approved by the 2003 legislature.

While we may have hoped for a rainbow after this stormy session, the dark clouds still linger and cast a shadow over the state elections and the upcoming 2005 legislative session. Discontented anti-tax constituents will strike at those legislators who worked hard to find ways to fund Nevada's educational, health care and social service needs. Nevada Women's Lobby and others who support women, children and families will need to stand tall as a lightning rod to absorb these strikes from self-centered and short-sighted malcontents, and redirect the focus to Nevada's children, seniors and families.



GROWTH, WATER & QUALITY OF LIFE

Even with the extreme drought we're experiencing, there is an adequate water supply for Nevada's current residents. Existing levels of growth, however, threaten our quality of life with over-crowded roads, dirty air, and an enormous stress on existing water sources. It will only get worse if we continue as one of the fastest growing states in the country.

Some claim that southern Nevada's water supply is no problem to a continued population boom, and the Southern Nevada Water Authority has proposed the construction of water pipelines from rural Nevada to Las Vegas. This would allow Las Vegas to grow to 3.5 million people. Our congressional delegation recently introduced a bill that grants rights of way for these water pipelines.

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN) contends that importing water from rural counties is an expensive and risky proposal and would be done at the expense of others who call Nevada home. They say the environmental impact to eastern Nevada could be immense. If built, the Nevada pipelines will take ground water supplies from rural parts of our state, which are in the same extreme drought as southern Nevada. It would cost billions of dollars to drill wells, construct the hundreds of miles of pipeline, and do the hydrological and environmental studies that would be necessary.

PLAN and environmental groups say there are other more environmentally sound and cost-effective water supply options available, and that water conservation should be a key part of any solution. They also caution against continued high growth and sprawl.

Paul Brown of PLAN says "The risks and costs of building the water pipelines are too high. Responsible growth should not mean sacrificing the quality of life of some residents to benefit others."

VOTE !



FEDERAL CUTS MAGNIFIED IN NEVADA

Each time a federally funded program caps its funds at current levels or rolls funding back to earlier levels (which is happening a lot lately), Nevada gets a double whammy.

Our wildly growing population is not part of the formula, so we are left trying to serve an ever growing number of people at funding levels that were already inadequate for earlier populations.

The Economic Policy Institute's *Nevada Impact Analysis: Effects of the 2004 Congressional Budget Resolution** reported, "Nevada Will Suffer \$123 Million in Cuts to Key Programs Over Ten Years to Pay for Tax Breaks for the Wealthy."

The report concluded that these cuts "will hamper Nevada's ability to address key priorities such as education, security, healthcare and infrastructure." After discussing cutbacks and shortages and Nevada's serious budget crisis, they said the cuts "will only exacerbate this fiscal crisis, further reducing the state's capacity to meet existing needs while making the escalation of such needs likely."

*The Economic Policy Institute analysis is available at epinet.org.

SOUTHERN NEVADA GROWTH

The residential population in the Las Vegas Metropolitan area now exceeds 1.6 million while the tourist population is over 36 million per year. *The 2003 Southern Nevada Community Assessment** by the United Way and the Nevada Community Foundation also states that explosive growth (see page 1) has led to a constant need for more schools, homes and roads, and ongoing challenges to make health care and social services available to families and children.

A general finding of the report: "Women and racial/ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected in virtually every area examined in this study." The "Big Four" issues found by survey to be of concern to southern Nevadans were economic issues, health, education and the environment. A sampling of data from the 99-page report on a broad array of issues follows.

Approximately 60% of the workers are employed in retail trade or in the service sector but many of them are not earning a living wage; thus housing, health care, health insurance and childcare cannot be afforded with only one parent working. Both members of a couple are often forced to work two different shifts in a 24-hour economy, increasing stress in family life as parents also try to meet the responsibilities of childcare and teen supervision.

Accompanying Las Vegas' growth has been an increase of over 250,000 students, the sixth largest in the nation. Between 12 and 14 new schools are opened every year adding 14,000 new students. Yet the school district has had to cut \$97 million over the last three years. Though funds are cut, studies show that a dollar invested in early childhood education brings a far greater return as children develop the foundations needed to be successful and productive members of society.

*Excerpted from *The 2003 Southern Nevada Community Assessment* by United Way of Southern Nevada and Nevada Community Foundation. The full report is available at www.uwaysn.org, and includes a broad range of community issues, plus conclusions and recommendations in many areas.

Watch for NWL's Pre-Election Newsletter for

- AAUW's Candidate Survey
- Selected Nevada Ballot Questions
- Unfinished Business - Funding Nevada's Services

HELP NEVADA DO BETTER

It is important to elect and re-elect state legislators who have demonstrated commitment to our children, seniors and families; it is equally vital to support the national candidates who will listen to our voices in Washington D.C. We must elect government officials who are knowledgeable about our issues and will have the courage to stand behind the sometimes unpopular and tough decisions that have to be made in order for Nevada to remain a great place to live.

As you read this issue of *Visions & Voices*, the campaign season is going into full swing. There are many open seats in Nevada's legislature, and there are races for Family Court, Nevada Supreme Court, local and state school boards and county commissions, as well as U.S. congressional races and the very important election for U.S. President.

Those elected will be deciding how to manage the many challenges of our rapidly growing communities over the next decade. Family Court judges will make decisions daily which will have life-long impacts on families. State and local school boards will determine how our children are educated and where they go to school.

Not only is it important to get voters registered and to the polls, but it also is critical to educate those voters about the candidates and Nevada issues.

Do your part:

- Meet the candidates, ask them the tough questions, and support those who can answer those questions and seem to have the fortitude to stick by the decisions that have to be made.
- Volunteer some time to get out the vote or to help candidates who will work toward the future you want for Nevada.
- Write letters to the editor to keep the focus on children, seniors, families.
- Encourage everyone you know to become informed and to vote knowledgeably in November.

An informed electorate can be the deciding factor in whether we grow with a positive or negative impact on Nevada citizens and our quality of life.

NEVADA GROWTH & VOTING

Low voter turnouts are the norm in Nevada (48th lowest in 2000), allowing a few people to make the decisions for the whole state. High growth and a transient population mean many citizens have not yet made a commitment to Nevada. Some consider their move temporary--just for a job--and others are more focused on day-to-day getting by than on public policy and elections.

As advocates for women and families lacking resources and a voice in policy, we at NWL are especially supportive of efforts to register and activate those whose futures will depend on the public policy decisions to be made by the election winners.

GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

How many times have you been asked to register to vote this week? With Nevada considered one of the key states in determining the U.S. presidential race, we have become the focus of multiple get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. All are seeking volunteer help. Political parties have people at most community events, and some examples of other GOTV projects in Nevada are:

PLAN2Vote Coalition, of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (planevada.org), is coordinating voter registration efforts by Nevada non-profits. Their broad GOTV campaign targets low-income communities, including women and people of color.

America Coming Together (ACT), seeks to elect progressive candidates and has offices in Las Vegas and Reno (702)382-4541, (775)337-2555

ProjectVote.org seeks to register and mobilize low-income and minority citizens.

NewVotersProject.org aims at increasing the vote and involvement of 18 to 24-year-olds.

Planned Parenthood Mar Monte registers in their clinics and is targeting single women under 40 who have never registered to vote nor voted (775)688-5560 x277.

NEVADANS JOIN MARCH FOR CHOICE

Forty-five Nevadans and over one million others marched for choice in Washington D.C. in April. The overriding theme was how critical the upcoming elections are to protecting the right to choice. Below is one of the signs carried by Nevada's delegation.



ACLU HONORS FIRST LAS VEGAS WOMAN ATTORNEY

Emilie Wanderer, at 102 years of age, the oldest living member of the Nevada Bar Association, was honored by ACLU Nevada by initiating the Emilie Wanderer Civil Libertarian Award. Bobbie Gang, NWL lobbyist, joined former U.S. Senator Richard Bryan, Dean of Boyd School of Law Richard Morgan, and NAACP Las Vegas President Dean Ishman to speak of Emilie's accomplishments at ACLU's June reception.

Emilie used her profession to champion the rights of women, children and minorities. Bobbie noted that when Emilie practiced law in New York she represented children in the "Wayward Minors Court" and helped found the National Association of Women Lawyers. In Nevada, she worked to establish the juvenile and family court systems.

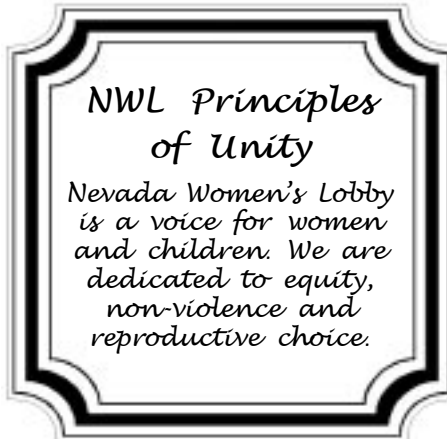
Active in women's organizations, Emilie was named Woman of the Year by Nevada Business and Professional Women. Emilie's gift of \$500,000 to UNLV established scholarships for law students and also sustained the Las Vegas Women's Oral History Project for two years.

CALENDAR

- August 10, 5:30, Judicial Candidate Forum and Wine Tasting**, Northern NV Women Lawyers, Washoe Grill, Reno
- August 24, How to Successfully Lobby State Legislatures** (\$300)
- August 25, How to Successfully Lobby State Regulatory Agencies** (\$175), PLAN, Pinon Plaza, Carson City. Discounts for registration by 8/6 and for registering for both days, (775)882-1565
- September 14, 7-9 pm, School Board Candidates Voter Forum**, AAUW-Reno in conjunction with LWW, Reno, McQueen High Theater, (775)828-1993
- September 26, 4-8 pm. Fundraiser**, AAUW and Nevada Women's History Project, Benna House, Reno, \$35, (775)787-8779
- October 21, 7-9 pm, Washoe County & Reno City Candidate Forum**, AAUW-Reno, LWW, McQueen High, (775)828-1993
- October 22, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Task Force Conference**, Reno, childabuseprevention.com
- October 23, Women's Forum**, Silver Sage & Reno BPW, Belle's Tea Cottage, Reno, (775)835-6091, (775) 828-1993
- October 31, 2-5 pm, Education Scholarship Fundraiser**, AAUW-Reno, Wilbur May Museum, (775)828-1993

PLEASE JOIN NWL

There's still time to become a 2004 NWL member. Use our web site below, or just clip and mail this form ☐ Dues are our main source of funding and your membership is very important to us.



NWL CONTACTS

Email NVWL@aol.com
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South
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Voicemail (702)615-2383

MEMBERSHIP 2004

Send to: **Nevada Women's Lobby**
Northern Region
P.O. Box 5565, Reno, NV 89513
Southern Region
P.O. Box 46292, Las Vegas, NV 89114
Or join online: nevadawomenslobby.org

Name _____
Organization _____
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Phone (day) _____
Phone (night) _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____

Dues:

- Individual \$40
- Living Lightly \$15
- Sustaining \$100
- Circle of Empowerment \$250
- Organization \$75

NWL dues are not tax deductible.



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INSIDE

In this newsletter, which focuses on Nevada's growth, you can read about

- Growth's Impact on Nevada Families
- Water in Nevada
- Growth and Nevada Voting
- How You Can Help

CALENDAR

•**August 5, Noon, Candidate Forum**, Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys, Pullman Grill at Main Street Station, Las Vegas

•**August 21, 8 am-6 pm, World of Women Health Expo**, Southern Nevada Area Health Education Center and Women's Health Connection (702)318-8452

•**September 19, 7-9 pm, Candidate Forum** (for all candidates surviving the primaries), Congregation Ner Tamid, 2761 Emerson Ave., Las Vegas, (702)733-6292

•**October 23, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Task Force Conference**, Keynote: David Finkelhor, Ph.D., Reno, childabuseprevention.com

•**March 2005, Grassroots Lobby Days**, Nevada Women's Lobby, Carson City. Plan ahead for three great days of learning, networking and lobbying at the Nevada State Legislature, nevadawomenslobby.org

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MEMBERSHIP 2004

Send to: **Nevada Women's Lobby**
Southern Region
P.O. Box 46292, Las Vegas, NV 89114
Northern Region
P.O. Box 5565, Reno, NV 89513
Or join online: nevadawomenslobby.org

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Organization _____
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City _____
State/Zip _____
Physical Address _____
City _____
State/Zip _____
Phone (day) _____
Phone (night) _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____

Dues:

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 Circle of Empowerment \$250
 Organization \$75

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