EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
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We always hear about the rights of democracy, but the major responsibility of it is participation.
--Wynton Marsalis

Participating in anything takes time, which is something most of us find to be in short supply. Yet, participation is critical when year after year the Legislature enacts laws that impact common-interest communities, often with mixed results. Effective participation requires understanding how legislation is made and where you can have the most impact in the process.

Where to Find Information Quickly
Effective participation means knowing where to look for information on proposed legislation.   From the Legislature's website at http://www.leg.state.nv.us/ , you can register for Personalized Legislative Tracking (PLT) which updates you on the status of selected Bill Draft Requests and Bills. Basic tracking is free. You may also look up information on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System or "NELIS" which offers information on bills and committee meetings, among other things. In previous years, the Legislature has offered residents the opportunity to cast a vote for or against bills in an electronic "straw poll." Look for this feature on the Legislature's website once the 2017 session opens.

Target Your Communications to the Right Legislators
In no particular order, legislators are interested in three groups of people: their constituents, their donors, and individuals who have information or interest in an issue that has importance to them. The 63-member Nevada Legislature is composed of 21 Senators and 42 Assemblypersons representing geographic districts. Each Legislator serves on a committee. Focus your efforts on your elected representatives and those serving on the committee which will hear the Bills of interest to you. To find out who the legislators for your district are, go to the Nevada Legislature's website and click on the link "Who's My Legislator?" located midway down the right side of the screen. Type in your address and be rewarded with your district number, legislator's name, party affiliation and term. Click on the legislator's name for a brief biography and contact information. HOA bills are heard in the Judiciary Committee of each House. Check the Legislature's website for committee assignments.

Communicate at the Right Time
The period of time when a Bill is in Committee is the most effective time for communication. If a Bill fails to pass out of Committee, it dies. Amendments are crafted in Committee. While the actual "horse trading" and drafting generally occurs out of public view in work sessions to which a limited number of fellow legislators, lobbyists, and issue activists are invited, there will be a public hearing on each Bill. If you can attend the public hearing to show support or opposition to a Bill, it can be an effective statement. If you cannot attend in person, then write, e-mail or call Committee members to express your opinion. If the Bill passes out of Committee, contact <u>your representative</u> before the vote or use the electronic straw poll to express your opinion in a way all Legislator's will see. Wait until you see a Bill is Enrolled and therefore on its way to the Governor before contacting him.

Make Participation in the Democratic Process an Annual Activity
Being a Nevada Legislator is a part time job and chances are your Legislator is not an HOA expert. The Legislature meets every other year for 4 months, which is not a great deal of time to pass a budget and address the hundreds of bills proposed each session. This means that the legislative session itself is not the best time to try and educate your representative about the benefits of community association living. The best time to talk about something complicated like a common-interest community is outside the legislative session. Ask your Association to make a commitment to invite elected representatives to the community in the off-years so that you can build relationships when each side has the time to invest.