

09 SESSION REVIEW FOR REALTORS®

Following a historic election cycle in which Democrats swept into office at a national level, Nevada was not immune to the tidal wave. As Democrats seized control of the State Senate for the first time in 17 years, and also secured a veto proof majority in the State Assembly, REALTORS® were faced with operating in a new political paradigm. Accustomed to the business friendly confines of the Republican controlled State Senate, the Lobbying Team and Legislative Committee for the REALTORS® adeptly adapted their legislative agenda to meet the philosophy of a democratically controlled body.

Budget and Taxes

As legislators walked into the State Capitol, following two special sessions to close pressing budget holes in the previous biennium, Governor Gibbons submitted a budget which closed a \$2 billion deficit without raising taxes. However, most legislators in both parties found the Governor's budget proposal unacceptable, viewing it as an assault on the quality of life in Nevada with its draconian cuts in higher and lower education – cuts of 36% and 4%, respectively. Thus, leaders in both parties from both houses set out to begin the arduous process of reforming the Governor's budget in these tough economic times. Working through a series of topic-based budget meetings, legislators systematically worked through the first weeks of the Session identifying the needs of the state. However, as the clock of the 120-day Session kept ticking along, and the

budget deficit ballooned from \$2 billion to \$3 billion, legislators were forced to make the difficult decisions and balance the quality of life needs of the state citizens, with the realism that a tax increase was inevitable.

In the end, a myriad of cuts totaling \$1 billion, along with nearly \$1 billion in tax increases, combined with approximately \$1.2 billion in federal stimulus dollars, allowed legislators to adjourn the Legislative Session on the 120th day. And despite the Governor's vetoes of the tax increase and budget, legislators secured more than enough votes to override the Governor's vetoes (a 2/3rd's majority was needed in both the Senate and the Assembly to override the Governor's action).

REALTOR® Agenda

For REALTORS®, an aggressive legislative agenda focused on consumer and industry specific issues marked the '09 Session. Focusing on critical issues like legalization of broker price opinions, changing the timeframe for renewal periods for real estate licensees from two to four years, and disclosure of homeowners associations related fees, the Lobbying Team for the REALTORS® in Carson City successfully maneuvered through the legislative process. With a legislative package developed at a local level, and refined by the state Legislative Committee, REALTORS® played a critical role in the education of legislators on the importance of real estate issues.

Other Real Estate Related Legislation

While the REALTORS® promoted a consumer friendly legislative package, members also faced serious assaults on their business structures, as well as efforts to undermine a normal real estate transaction by creating arduous point of sale requirements for homes with pools, and placing REALTORS® at the center of energy efficient homes as energy auditors and energy rating specialists. Outlined in the confines of this report are some more draconian measures pushed by legislators and special interest groups during the '09 session.

A Successful Session

Overall, while numerous other special interest groups had a difficult Session, the REALTOR® community was able to carry out its legislative agenda and defeat harmful legislation that was introduced. The REALTORS® have become a resource for real estate issues, thanks to your involvement and political contributions.

For a topic by topic summary or the comprehensive legislative report, please visit www.nvar.org.



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