



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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## STAFF REPORT

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** January 26, 2021

**DATE:** November 2020  
**TO:** Board of County Commissioners  
**FROM:** Jamie Rodriguez, Government Affairs Manager  
[JARodriguez@washoecounty.us](mailto:JARodriguez@washoecounty.us), 775-328-2010

**THROUGH:** Eric Brown, County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to review and approve the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles including an update and discussion regarding the 81<sup>st</sup> (2021) Session of the Nevada State Legislature with possible direction to staff. (All Commission Districts.) **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

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### **SUMMARY**

The Board is asked to review and possibly approve the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles. The legislative principles are used by staff, lobbyists and elected officials to guide their actions while representing Washoe County during the 2021 Legislative Session.

Department Strategic Objective supported by this item: Regional and Community Leadership

### **BACKGROUND**

The Legislative Principles provide guidance to staff, lobbyists and elected officials during the Legislative Session including legislative events and any interim activity. The Board is asked to review and approve the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles.

### **DISCUSSION**

The 81<sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the Nevada Legislature is scheduled to begin February 1, 2021 and last for 120 days. Prior to the start of the new session the Board is being asked to review and approve the Legislative Principles that are used by staff, lobbyists and elected officials to guide their actions while representing Washoe County during the Legislative Session.

Washoe County Legislative Principles are defined as:

**Respect for Governmental Roles**

**AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_**

*Partners Providing Service to Our Shared Constituents*

All Governments in Nevada (State, County, Cities, School Districts and Special Districts) are partners in providing consistent and reliable services to our shared constituents, and therefore all levels of government must be viable in order for our citizens to enjoy an outstanding quality of life. A great State requires strong, effective, mutually respectful governments at all levels.

*Focus on Outcomes*

Services to citizens should be provided efficiently, effectively and must demonstrate measurable results. All governments (State, County, Cities, School District and Special Districts) should be held accountable for measurable outcomes and cost-effective performance, while at the same time be given the flexibility to let elected leaders decide how best to achieve those outcomes.

*Local Determination*

Statewide policy decisions should be made by State leaders; local policy decisions should be made by local leaders. Local governments must have the right to control their resources, and voters should have the ability to decide whether those resource are sufficient or not. Local governments should have discretion on delivering State programs and services when funding is reduced or diverted by the State.

*Local Decision-Making and Flexibility*

Washoe County urges the preservation of local prerogatives over matters traditionally and best governed at the local level. The legislature should encourage local officials and citizens to solve local problems. Legislation should foster local flexibility and assist local government leaders and the citizens they represent in addressing problems in ways that best serve their community.

*Unfunded Mandates*

Washoe County believes the Nevada State Legislature should not impose mandated functions, activities, or regulations on local governments without providing financial resources or means to meet the costs of carrying out those mandates.

**Recover our Economic Strength**

*Support Economic Recovery and Development*

Promote regional collaboration on economic development and support a coordinated regional response to the economic challenges and opportunities facing Northern Nevada.

*Long Term, Sustainable Solutions*

The economy and tax revenue base on which all governments in Nevada rely are undergoing a fundamental restructure. Simply shifting the service burden or revenues from one government service provider to another will not responsibly and sustainably meet the needs of citizens of Nevada and Washoe County. All governments need to be working together toward long-term solutions for service provisions and equitable, stable funding for those services, and not at one another's expense.

*Fiscal Responsibility*

Washoe County supports local government fiscal responsibility and long-term financial planning; including retaining and expanding tools at the local level to better manage budget and cash flow and responsibly structure revenue sources.

### **Regional Solutions to Service Provision**

#### *Intergovernmental Collaboration*

Washoe County supports collaborative efforts of service providers within the region and the state to provide the best service possible at the lowest possible cost to the constituents of Washoe County.

#### *Legislative Relations*

Washoe County recognizes that local governments in the region have numerous areas of mutual interest, and that a cooperative and integrated approach to legislative relations best serves the interests of the residents of Washoe County.

### **Communications**

#### *Representation*

Washoe County is committed to working with the 2021 Legislature, community stakeholders and business partners to provide effective representation of Washoe County's legislative goals. The Washoe County Legislative Team is readily available during the 2021 Legislative Session to assist legislative committees, individual legislators and legislative staff to provide timely and accurate response to requests for information that will assist in the deliberation and formulation of legislation.

### **Legislative Communication Policy**

#### *Legislative Updates*

When the Nevada Legislature is convened, Washoe County staff (including, as appropriate, the County's contract lobbyists) shall communicate at each regular Commission meeting, pursuant to a standing agenda item, to provide information and obtain direction on various legislative issues. It is understood that staff will communicate the majority position and/or direction of the Commission when talking with legislators and when making presentations at the Legislature.

#### *Board Direction*

Direction will be sought from the Commission regarding the objectives and intent of proposed legislation as opposed to specific bill language. This is necessary because of the fluidity of the legislative process. It also allows meaningful input by County lobbyists in drafting proposed bill language.

#### *Adopting Board Legislative Position*

When a legislative issues comes before the Commission for direction or action, the majority vote will be the official position of the Commission. The Commissioners and staff agree not to communicate minority positions or opinions to legislators or the Legislature. Lobby staff (including the County's contract lobbyists) may indicate, when asked, the identity of Commission dissenter(s). Lobby staff (including county contract lobbyists) shall not present any opinion or position of a single Commissioner on any issue if there is any question as to whether the Commission as a whole shares the opinion or position.

#### *Lobbyist Authority*

Lobby staff (including the County's contract lobbyists) shall have the authority to make decisions on matters known to be in the best interest of the policy making/management position of the County. Direction on issues shall be sought from and/or approved by the County Manager or, in his discretion, an Assistant County Manager, or department head or division manager. If there is a question regarding the impact of an issue, the County Manager shall, if there is time to do so, direct the issue be brought to the next Commission meeting for direction from the Commission. However, when the above procedure is unavailable due to the need for immediate decision-making, it is understood that lobby staff (including the County's contract lobbyist) shall confer and collectively decide the appropriate position on behalf of the County.

#### *Commission Participation*

Commissioners may be called upon to appear before Legislative committees and/or meet with individual legislators, as necessary, when major issues are developing. Commissioners are requested to notify the County Manager (or Assistant County Manager in his absence) of all contacts with legislators on behalf of County issues, in order to provide a cohesive and well-organized lobbying effort. It is important that Commissioners not be seen on a regular basis at the legislature so as to preserve the impact of their presence to issues of major importance to the County. More frequent involvement will dilute the impact/importance of Commissioner's presence.

#### *Appointed Boards: Authorization to Represent Washoe County*

Members of a board, commission or task force appointed by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners may appear before the Nevada State Legislature, Committees of the Legislature, and/or meet with individual Legislators, as representing the interests of Washoe County only if specifically authorized to do so by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners or the Washoe County Manager.

#### *Special Meetings*

When the Nevada Legislature is in session, the Board of County Commissioners may hold special meetings scheduled on the off weeks between regular meetings to allow for legislative updates and to provide direction to staff.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the review and approval of the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners review and approve the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles.

### **POSSIBLE MOTION**

Following the Board's discussion on this agenda item, a possible motion would be "Move to approve the 2021 Washoe County Legislative Principles."