



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: *January 14, 2025*

DATE: Wednesday, January 22, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Cadence Matijevich, Government Affairs Liaison, Office of the County Manager, (775) 328-2077, cmatijevich@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Eric P. Brown, County Manager

SUBJECT: Possible discussion and approval of the 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles, including an update and direction to staff regarding the 83rd Session of the Nevada Legislature. The principles are meant to serve as a framework of guidance to staff, lobbyists and elected officials in representing the County before the Nevada Legislature and provide a means to advance and protect the County's interests on state-level issues. Among other things, they address legislative, regulatory, administrative and fiscal impact issues that may arise during the legislative session. Approval of principles may include but is not necessarily limited to the following overarching categories: effective communication, respect for governmental roles in delivering quality public service, and economic strength and diversity. Manager's Office. (All Commission Districts.) **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to review and provide direction to staff regarding the 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles. These legislative principles are to be used by staff, lobbyists and elected officials in guiding their activities and actions while representing Washoe County before the Nevada Legislature.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Fiscal Sustainability, Economic Impacts, Vulnerable Populations, and Innovative Services.

PREVIOUS ACTION

- No previous action specific to the 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles. The Board provided direction to staff on potential Washoe County Bill Draft Requests (BDRs) for the 83rd Session of the Legislature on April 23, 2024, July 10, 2024, and August 20, 2024. Based upon the direction from those meetings, Washoe County did not submit any BDRs of its own for the 83rd Session of the Nevada Legislature, but did seek and secure sponsorship of the following two BDRs by the Nevada Association of Counties:

AGENDA ITEM # _____

- To amend NRS Chapters 239 and 259 to clarify that certain records of a Medical Examiner/Coroner are public records and to clarify that certain records of a Medical Examiner/Coroner are confidential and are not public records.
- To revise NRS Chapters 239 and 293 to establish that records of voter signatures held by a County Clerk or Registrar of Voters for purposes of establishing or validating voter registration are required to be made available for inspection at the office of a County Clerk or Registrar of Voters, but that the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters shall be prohibited from providing copies of such records to the public.

Additionally, the Board directed that the following recommendations for legislation be submitted to the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System:

- To amend chapter 432, Statutes of Nevada, 1999, to require the Reno-Sparks Convention Authority to grant to Washoe County a percentage of certain taxes collected from the rental of transient lodging in Incline Village and Crystal Bay to be used towards paying the costs of public transit to, from, and within the portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin located in Washoe County.
- To amend chapter 432, Statutes of Nevada, 1999, to impose a surcharge of \$4 on the per night charge for rental of transient lodging in Incline Village and Crystal Bay to be distributed to Washoe County to be used towards paying the costs of public transit to, from, and within the portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin located in Washoe County.

BACKGROUND

The 83rd Session of the Nevada Legislature is scheduled to begin on Monday, February 2, 2025, and will last for 120 days. Historically, the Board of County Commissioners has approved legislative principles prior to the start of each regular session of the Nevada Legislature.

The 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles provide guidance to staff, lobbyists and elected officials in representing the County before the Nevada Legislature and provides a means to advance and protect the County's interests on issues at the state level. These guiding principles define boundaries of the program to address legislative, regulatory, administrative and fiscal impact issues that may arise during the legislative session while also providing flexibility so that the Office of the County Manager, elected officials and contracted legislative representatives may be proactive and respond quickly within the dynamic environment of Nevada's biennial legislative process. These principles are intended to support Washoe County's vision of being the social, economic and policy leadership force in Nevada and the western United States.

Washoe County's state legislative interests include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social service issues, including child welfare, indigent health care, safety net programs, and homeless services and programs, including permanent supportive housing service programs;
- Accelerating the development of adequate behavioral health resources, including buildout of the crisis response system, implementation of the sequential intercept model, supports for women and children, and behavioral health workforce development;
- Eliminating housing supply shortages, particularly the shortage of affordable and attainable housing;
- Ensuring homeowners can obtain and maintain affordable property insurance;
- Establishing permanent funding source(s) for transit and transportation services to, from and within the Washoe County portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin;
- Taxation, land assessment, franchise fees, and other County revenue source issues, including funding for maintenance and construction of county roads;
- Land use issues, regional planning issues, and issues related to annexation, public utilities, capital projects, transportation, and natural resources;
- Various water issues including regional water and flood control issues, water rights, water utility rates and consolidation of water services;
- Administration of safe, secure, and accurate elections, including measures that would provide authority and resources to ensure the security of elections personnel, equipment, systems, and facilities (both physical security and cybersecurity);
- Homeland security and emergency preparedness/resiliency issues; and
- Public employment issues related to employee health care, worker's compensation, public employee retirement, and collective bargaining.

Washoe County's 2025 State Legislative Principles are defined as:

Effective Communication

- **Representation**
Washoe County is committed to working with the 2025 Legislature, community stakeholders and business partners to provide effective representation of Washoe County's legislative objectives. The Washoe County Legislative Team is readily available to assist legislative committees, individual legislators and legislative staff to provide timely and accurate responses to requests for information that will assist in the formation and deliberation of proposed legislation.
- **Cooperative 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 interest of the residents of Washoe County.

We will act with integrity when engaging with other governmental entities on legislative matters.

- **Legislative Updates**

When the Nevada Legislature is convened, the Washoe County Legislative Team (including, as appropriate, the County's contract lobbyists) shall present at each regular Board meeting to provide information and, when necessary, obtain Board direction on various legislative issues. It is understood that the Washoe County Legislative Team will communicate the majority position and/or direction of the Board when speaking with legislators, legislative staff, and when making presentations at the Legislature.

- **Board Direction**

Direction will be sought from the Board regarding the objectives and intent of proposed legislation, as opposed to direction on specific bill language. This approach is preferred due to the iterative nature of the legislative process as it allows meaningful input by County lobbyists in the drafting of proposed bill language, including amendments to proposed legislation.

- **Adopting Board Legislative Position**

When a legislative issue comes before the Board for direction or action, the majority vote will be the official position of Washoe County. The Board and staff agree not to communicate minority opinions to legislators or the Legislature. The Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyists) may indicate, when asked, the identity of dissenter(s). When communicating their personal opinions on proposed legislation, Commissioners will be clear that they are communicating in a personal capacity and not on behalf of Washoe County. Lobbying staff (including the County's 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 majority of the Board shares that opinion or position.

- **Commission Legislative Liaison(s)**

At their discretion, the Board may name up to two Commissioners to serve as liaisons to the Washoe County Legislative Team to assist the team in considering proposed legislation and the development of County positions on proposed legislation. At the direction of the Board Chair, the Washoe County Legislative Team will meet with the Commission Legislative Liaison(s) on a routine basis for the purpose of providing updates on proposed legislation and emerging legislative issues.

- **Special Meetings**

When the Nevada Legislature is in session, the Board may hold special meetings to allow for legislative updates and to provide direction to staff. Meetings between the Commission Legislative Liaison(s) and County lobbying staff shall not be considered Special Meetings.

- **Lobbyist Authority**

The Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyists) shall have authority to make decisions on matters known to be in the best interest of the policy making/management position of the County. Lobbying staff shall look to the Washoe County Strategic Plan for guidance on policy positions. 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 or other designee. If there is a question regarding the impact of an issue, the County Manager shall, if there is time to do so, direct that the issue be brought to the next Board meeting for discussion and possible direction from the Board. However, when it is not possible to follow the above stated procedure due to the need for immediate decision-making, it is understood that the Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyists) shall confer and collectively decide the appropriate position on behalf of the County. In certain circumstances it may be determined that it is in the best interest of the County to abstain from taking a position on proposed legislation.

- **Commission Participation at the Legislature**

Commissioners may be called upon to appear before Legislative committees and/or meet with individual legislators, as necessary, when major issues are developing. To provide a cohesive and well-organized lobbying effort, Commissioners are requested to notify the County Manager (or Designated Acting Manager in his absence) of all contacts with legislators regarding County issues. To reserve the impact of their presence for issues of major importance, it is recommended that Commissioners not routinely be present at the Legislative Building.

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

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

Respect for Governmental Roles in Delivering Quality Public Service

- **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 government at all levels. 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.

- **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 right to decide whether those resources are sufficient or not. Local governments should have discretion on how and whether to deliver State-funded programs and services when State funding for such programs and services is insufficient, reduced, diverted or eliminated.

- **Local Decision-Making and Flexibility**

Washoe County urges the preservation of local prerogatives over matters traditionally and best governed at the local level. State legislative policy 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 communities.

- **Focus on Outcomes**

Services to citizens should be provided efficiently, should be effective, and must demonstrate measurable results. All governments should be held accountable for measurable outcomes and cost-effective performance, while at the same allow flexibility for local elected leaders to decide how best to achieve those outcomes with their respective communities.

Economic Strength and Diversity

- **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, including addressing the shortage of affordable and attainable housing in the region. Encourage legislation that would remove barriers to the establishment and growth of local businesses, including non-industrial agricultural businesses.

- **Long Term, Sustainable Revenue Solutions**

The economy and tax revenue base on which local governments in Nevada rely continue to undergo fundamental changes, particularly given changes in consumer behaviors in response to recent inflationary pressures and relatively high interest rates. In response to these changes, public entities must work together to identify and implement long-term solutions for service provision and equitable, stable funding sources that do not benefit one entity to the detriment of one another. Transferring service responsibilities from one government service provider to another without sufficient accompanying resources will not responsibly and sustainably meet the needs of the citizens of Nevada and Washoe County. Washoe County supports the creation of new revenue sources, but also believes that removing constraints on existing revenue sources is worthy of strong consideration.

- **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 budgets and cash flows, and to allow for responsibly structured local revenue sources.

- **Unfunded Mandates**

Washoe County believes the Nevada Legislature should not impose mandated functions, activities, or programs on local governments without providing sufficient financial resources and/or other means to meet the cost of carrying out these mandates. Funding allocated for ongoing State programs delivered by local governments must account for increased caseloads as well as the effects of inflation on the cost of delivering services.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve the 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles and provide direction to staff to operate in accordance therewith.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be 'Move to approve the 2025 Washoe County State Legislative Principles and to direct staff to operate in accordance therewith'.