

# The 2019 Nevada Legislature - Expectations vs. Reality

By: Rick McCann, Executive Director of NASPO-CWA Local 9110

**T**he Nevada Constitution requires the state legislature to convene every two years (odd numbered years) for 120 consecutive days. The 80th Legislative Session commenced in Carson City on February 4, 2019 and was concluded sine die on June 3, 2019.

During that 120 days, we observed the legislature's usual snail's pace walk at the beginning; followed by a light jog when bills started dropping from their draft requests and committees were finally assigned to hear the bills; to a relaxed "Hey, we got this" cruise control approach by the legislative leadership into the first couple of months; to a bit of panic that required the leadership to suspend procedural rules designed to keep things moving forward; to a higher level of panic and teeth gnashing when major appropriations bills had yet to fall into our laps for study with only a few weeks to go; to a shift into high gear and a full sprint to the finish line where committees were frantically conducting hearings late into the night and on weekends in order to finish on time.

Such is the case when neither party controls the state Assembly, Senate and the Governor's office, right? Such is the case when neither party controls all three legs of the government, right?

But is it the case when Democrats (the party of labor ???) controls the Assembly with a super majority and only needs one Republican vote to have a super majority in the Senate, along with a Democratic Governor? In that scenario, we were bound to get everything we wanted and have been craving since the Labor Massacre of 2015, right? Well, sorta.

The 2019 legislative session was truly a contrast between labor's expectations (reasonable or not) and the realities of a rookie administration, conservative fiscal concerns even as Nevada has shown a bright financial future following the recession, and a concern for political redistricting that will occur following completion of the 2020 census. These things contributed to what was hardly a session fully controlled by labor.

Yes, the Democrats controlled everything this session. Yes, the Democrats used that power on many occasions to push their well-deserved agendas on equal rights, criminal justice reform, gun background checks and obtaining new taxes that weren't really called new taxes (expect the Republicans' lawsuits challenging those tax issues very soon). But during it all, we still found that we were bidding against ourselves on some issues that should have been "no brainer" labor bills. Despite their overwhelming political strength,

some of our labor "friends" were more interested in compromise with our opponents than helping us hold our ground involving issues that were pure labor matters.

But throughout it all, deeply rooted within the bowels of this mess, was the Nevada Association of Public Safety Officers (NAPSO), CWA Local 9110. We were in the hallways, the offices, the committees, and in the Governor's office before, during and after the 120 days of the session.

Despite the expectations many of us had that Christmas had arrived and a fully controlled Democratic legislature was about to deliver our bounty, such was not the case. But NAPSO/CWA did score on many fronts, including protecting our workers in Call Centers, protecting our public safety officers for workers compensation injuries and against violence committed on them and their families, returning many union rights that were stripped from us in 2015 by the Republican controlled legislature, and obtaining collective bargaining for our state workers for the first time in history.

Our expectations going into the session and the reality coming out of the session were different but, in the end NAPSO and CWA prevailed on many fronts and for that we are thankful. Now the work begins for 2021!