

OPINION

North Las Vegas Chamber's focus turns to politics this time of year

It's the time of year when we our main focus turns to politics and the workings of government. Although focused on state politics, the Chamber is active in what is occurring on a federal level and with the upcoming North Las Vegas municipal elections. For the first time in 12 years, residents of North Las Vegas will be electing a new mayor as Mayor Michael Montandon steps down due to term limits. North Las Vegas will also be electing new council members in Wards 1 and 3.



Sharon Powers Business Lobby

As a matter of policy the chamber does not endorse or financially support candidates. However, we know the importance of electing business friendly candidates and will publish the "Chamber's Approved List of Business-Friendly Candidates". Results from face-to-face interviews and past voting records (for incumbents) will be used to compile this list. Both candidates, or just one, or none at all could make the list.

Taxes and the State's budget remain one of the main focal points in this legislative session. The North Las Vegas Chamber on March 5 submitted the following written testimony to the Joint Committee on Taxation:

Position: Reforms and Efficiencies

We strongly support efforts by the Legislature to increase government efficiencies through increasing allocations to the state's rainy day fund and creation of budget stabilization accounts.

Position: Education Cuts

Reduced teacher compensation has a direct negative correlation to the quality of our future

workforce. Employers require graduates that have sound fundamental skills in reading, writing and math. Companies looking to relocate to the Southern Nevada area require an employee base that has sufficient competency levels to attract and keep new companies in the area. The North Las Vegas Chamber (NLVCC) strongly opposes a reduction in teacher salaries.

Position: Public Sector Employee Compensation

The Chamber strongly supports the essential services that public employees provide locally and statewide. We are concerned that government obligations to these hard-working people cannot be met long-term. It is critical that review, discussion and future reform of salaries and retirement benefits occur to protect the tax-paying citizens from the risk that this ever-increasing unfunded liability presents to the state's well-being.

Position: Public-Private Partnerships

Private sector services may better serve the public with

the efficient use of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and competitive bidding processes. Services such as groundskeepers, park maintenance, street sweeping, street light replacement are but a few of the types of services that could be competitively provided by the private sector, thus reducing costs for items such as equipment, maintenance, fuel, insurance, inflated retirement plans and excessive overtime. The pressure of competitive bidding reduces costs and increases output; something that should be considered during these difficult times.

Conclusion:

Any new tax or tax increase must be broad-based and not create new bureaucracy. The chamber believes that neither cutting budgets nor raising taxes is the answer without changing the way government conducts its affairs. Government must pursue public-private partnerships wherever possible. Government must demonstrate that it will make changes that result in efficiency such as employees participating in

benefit costs and compensation plans that are more in line with the private sector. Any tax increases or new taxes for this specific shortfall should have sunset provisions.

As a business organization we know that the wrong government action can have hurt business. As a chamber it is part of our core values to develop a strong local economy and protect business' interests with government. This is done by ensuring that business can operate without unnecessary government intrusion; that the public sector does not compete with the private sector; that the business climate remains "business-friendly" and that jobs are created for our citizens. To that extent we become involved in politics and will continue to be an advocate for you.

Sharon Powers is president and chief executive officer of the North Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce.