

NEVADA YOUTH LEGISLATURE: ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022



Prepared and Presented by:
Dillon Moss, Chair
Nevada Youth Legislature, 2021–2022

OVERVIEW

The current term of the Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL) began on August 3, 2021, and concludes on May 31, 2023. The 2021–2022 year of the NYL included many creative opportunities for youth legislators to learn and engage with one another on a more personal level throughout this year of virtual connections.

The first year of the NYL two-year term was dedicated to education and training of our youth legislators. Monthly trainings helped prepare them to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties of representing the youth in their senatorial districts. Youth legislators learned essential skills involving message accountability, listening, presentations, and negotiation. These trainings provided effective learning opportunities that will prepare youth legislators for the second year of their term, which will focus on the bill drafting process—from idea to drafting to advocacy.

Youth legislators also had several opportunities to connect with their colleagues beyond the monthly trainings. For example, between trainings, each youth legislator virtually participated in paired activities with a different youth legislator each month. Through these conversations, youth legislators learned more about the trainings and developed bonds with their NYL colleagues. These connections have helped boost morale despite not being able to meet in person.

This year concluded with each youth legislator planning and conducting their own community town hall meetings, either in-person or virtually. The success stories that youth legislators shared demonstrate the value of the NYL program in their own leadership development and public service opportunities.

MEETINGS AND TRAININGS

August 3, 2021

Training: Inaugural Training

On August 3, 2021, youth legislators participated in their first half-day virtual gathering, the Inaugural NYL Training. This training educated youth legislators about the NYL's history, logistics and protocols, decorum, statutory requirements, roles and responsibilities, and other essentials to help youth legislators maximize their performance during their two-year NYL terms.

NYL alumni mentor-trainers participated significantly in this inaugural training. The following contributors shared their wisdom and engaged youth legislators in meaningful dialogue:

- Rose Asaf, NYL Chair, 2014–2015;
- Joanna Bieda, NYL Chair, 2019–2020;
- Alex Bybee, NYL Chair, 2011–2012, and Board of Directors for Corporation for Public Benefit to Administer the NYL (NYL Board) Member, 2013–2019;
- Emily Espinosa, Youth Legislator, 2015–2017, and NYL Board Member, 2021 to present;
- Zhan Okuda-Lim, NYL Chair, 2010–2011, and NYL Board Member, 2011 to present;
- Nikki Tatalovich, Youth Legislator, 2011–2012; and
- Alex Wong, NYL Vice Chair, 2019–2020.

Assemblyman Jason Frierson, Speaker of the Nevada State Assembly, spoke to youth legislators about the importance of their roles in their communities and senate districts. He then administered the Oath of Office to all youth legislators in attendance.

Throughout the training, youth legislators had opportunities to listen and learn. They also received their first assignment, which was to draft an email to the Senate and Assembly members elected to represent their district, introduce themselves, and suggest a meeting with these legislators.

September 9, 2021

Meeting: Election of Officers

During their first meeting, youth legislators elected their 2021–2022 leadership team. Senator Valerie Wiener (Ret.), Chair, NYL Board, facilitated the elections. She asked each candidate to give a one-minute speech followed by a question and answer period with the final candidates for each office. Youth Legislator Dillon Moss was elected Chair and Youth Legislator Max Grinstein was elected Vice Chair.

Training: Message Accountability

Senator Wiener led the instruction in message accountability, highlighting key skills for presenting messages to youth constituents, specific audiences, and others. As with each monthly training throughout the NYL program, state legislators shared invaluable insights and answered youth legislators' questions about message accountability. Legislators contributing to this training included: Senator Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy, Senator Melanie Scheible, and Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson. Two NYL alumni mentor-trainers also provided insights and answered questions about message accountability: Joanna Bieda, NYL Chair, 2019–2020, and Salomee Levy, Youth Legislator, 2017–2019. Legislators and NYL alumni mentor-trainers stressed the importance of thinking before speaking and making promises to people only when it is possible to honor these commitments.

Prior to the training, several youth legislators were selected to participate in three role-playing scenarios. Each one was unique and showed a different experience where message accountability is extremely important.

Senator Wiener then introduced the paired activity component of each training. This is the first year in the history of the program that youth legislators did not participate in these activities during the real-time monthly trainings. Rather, youth legislators were paired with a different NYL colleague each month to meet virtually between trainings to discuss the assigned paired activity and grow stronger bonds with each other.

At the end of this training, youth legislators experienced another first-ever component of the training experience, which was an itinerary item specifically dedicated to questions or comments from youth legislators. This new item provided youth legislators with the opportunity to ask questions or make comments about the day's training and/or discuss something else that was prompting their curiosity.

October 12, 2021

Training: Effective Listening Skills

Youth legislators learned about how their leadership is significantly impacted by how well they master effective listening skills. Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop and Assemblywoman Jill Tolles provided insights and answered youth legislators' questions about listening skills. The legislators emphasized the importance of listening to constituents and making sure their voices are heard. They also suggested that youth legislators integrate youth constituents' ideas into their actions and decisions as public servants.

NYL alumni mentor-trainers also provided insights and answered youth legislators' questions about effective listening skills. Melekte Hailemeskel, NYL Chair, 2020–2021, and Jon Oglesby, NYL Vice Chair, 2008–2009, shared impressive anecdotes about how these listener-oriented skills have helped them succeed since their participation in the NYL program.

Senator Wiener guided youth legislators through essentials of effective listening skills and highlighted how they can maximize body language when listening, listen from a speaker's perspective, and maintain an open mind when listening to others. Senator Wiener led youth legislators in a personally revealing activity, which encouraged them to candidly and confidentially evaluate their own listening skills.

During the questions, comments, and discussion portion of the training, youth legislators shared what they learned about themselves and their role as youth legislators through the required outside activity "Three Questions and Answers."

December 1, 2021

Training: Presentation Skills

The NYL has established a practice that invites the vice chair to preside over at least one meeting/training during their leadership year; therefore, Vice Chair Grinstein chaired this training. Senator Wiener provided essential suggestions and insights about developing and delivering power presentations. This included: topic selection, text development, relationship-building with listeners, preparing for questions and answers, and more.

Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow and Assemblyman Steve Yeager shared valuable experiences and insights, as well as answered youth legislators' questions about presentation skills. NYL alumni mentor-trainers, Kate Krolicki, Vice Chair, 2014–2015, and Madeline Welch, Youth Legislator, 2013–2015, also shared their insights on power presentations and how they have benefitted from this skill since their participation in the NYL. Both alumni mentor-trainers also spoke about their NYL town hall meetings and how important it was to master power presentations in order to host successful town hall meetings.

February 3, 2022

Meeting: Selection of Student Adviser to the Nevada Association of Student Councils (NASC)

In compliance with all requirements of Nevada's Open Meeting Law, youth legislators selected a member of the NYL to consult with the NASC, concerning the nomination of a student member to the State Board of Education, pursuant to [Nevada Revised Statutes 385.021](#). Youth Legislator Oniana Boulware submitted her name for consideration as the NYL consultant to the NASC. Youth legislators unanimously supported her appointment.

Youth legislators discussed the qualities that Youth Legislator Boulware should consider/suggest during the process of selecting the student member of the State Board of Education. The nominee should be articulate, goal-oriented, and courageous.

Training: Town Hall Meetings

Senator Wiener led the presentation about town hall meetings. She highlighted the importance of engaging a teacher or school staff member to assist with the planning, venue, promotion, and execution of the town hall meeting. Many youth legislators noted the benefits of promoting their

town hall meetings through social media or through their school. Senator Wiener provided meaningful suggestions for conducting the meeting and how to maximize audience engagement, especially during the question and answer period.

Youth legislators then had the opportunity to hear from state legislators, who shared their insights regarding town hall meetings. Senator Roberta Lange and Assemblywoman Lisa Krasner described lessons learned, as well as responded thoughtfully to youth legislators' questions.

NYL alumni mentor-trainers, Kenneth Brooke, Youth Legislator, 2011–2012, and Ethan Foster, Chair, 2009–2010, answered relevant questions about public meetings and shared NYL and professional anecdotes.

Several youth legislators participated in three mock town hall meetings after which Senator Wiener provided feedback and suggestions.

Youth legislators were reminded to submit their town hall meeting plans. Following these public meetings, youth legislators were also required to submit their town hall meeting reports.

April 5, 2022

Meeting: Reports and Election of Officers

Youth Legislator Boulware provided an update concerning the nomination of a student member to the State Board of Education. She summarized the meeting she had with NASC, which considered five candidates for the position and finally nominated two finalists.

Chair Moss facilitated the election for the second year of the 2021–2023 NYL Term. Three candidates for each office had submitted completed questionnaires for their colleagues to consider prior to the meeting. After candidates shared their vision for the second year of the 2021–2023 Term, as well as why they were the best candidates for office, Youth Legislator Patrick Donn Dimasin was elected as Chair and Youth Legislator Samantha Lyle was elected as Vice Chair.

Senator Wiener led a discussion about what should be included in the statutorily required NYL annual report, which is submitted to the governor and legislators. Youth legislators shared ideas about what they would like to see included in this year's report.

Training: Effective Negotiation Skills

Jeanette Belz, J.K. Belz & Associates, Incorporated, led the interactive instruction in "Effective Negotiation Skills." Ms. Belz shared thoughtful insights and expertise, as well as answered youth legislators' questions about negotiation skills.

Senator Scott Hammond and Assemblywoman Robin L. Titus shared personal stories and suggestions about their struggles and successes with legislative negotiations. NYL alumni mentor-trainers Christiana Cabrera, Youth Legislator, 2011–2015, and Grant Gabriel, Chair,

2012–2013, shared anecdotes about successes and challenges in personal negotiation experiences.

Preselected youth legislators engaged in three scenarios involving negotiation skills. Following the role-playing, Senator Wiener shared observations and suggestions with youth legislators.

After reminding youth legislators about the May 11 “virtual conversation,” Senator Wiener announced that the August 3–4 NYL Midterm Training will take place in Carson City. This will be the first in-person gathering of the 2021–2023 NYL Term.

May 11, 2022

Virtual Conversation

Though an optional activity, several youth legislators participated in this end-of-year virtual conversation to share reflections about the first year of their term. This conversation was designed to invite youth legislators to provide their own perspectives about the program and suggestions for improvement. Youth legislators discussed questions included in the survey provided to them by Tina Ashdown, NYL Program Facilitator. Chair Moss facilitated the discussion.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the 2021–2022 year was marked by valuable learning opportunities, leadership expansion, and friendship building. From the meetings, trainings, conversations, and experiences, youth legislators received an in-depth look into the legislative process. They learned how the state legislature and elected legislators work on a day-to-day basis. They also learned the importance of interacting with constituents, as well as building relationships with those who work alongside them. This year has motivated youth legislators to expand their perspectives and pursue their vision for the youth of Nevada.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dillon Moss, Chair
Nevada Youth Legislature
2021–2022