

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Dini
Mr. Marvel
Mr. Fitzpatrick
Mrs. Westall
Mr. Harmon
Dr. Robinson
Mr. Craddock
Mr. Jeffrey
Mr. Getto
Mr. Bedrosian
Mr. Bergevin

GUESTS PRESENT

See Guest List attached

* * * * *

Chairman Dini called the meeting to order at 9 A.M.

AB 612 - AMENDS REQUIREMENTS FOR NOTICE OF DELINQUENT
PROPERTY TAXES

AB 643 - REPEALS REQUIREMENT TO PUBLISH OR MAIL
PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT ROLLS

GARY SIMPSON, Washoe County Treasurer

Mr. Simpson advised the Committee he was in complete agreement with AB 612. Mr. Simpson stated the common taxpayer is extremely annoyed to see his name printed in the local newspaper for all to see because of a misconception regarding the fourth quarter delinquent date. He said his office is beseiged with phone calls by irate taxpayers after publication and, in addition, it created an undue hardship on the employees of his office. He stated the advertising costs for printing were excessive and it could save the county money by not publishing. Mr. Simpson advised the Committee in addition to the publication they send out a notice by regular mail about one week prior to publication and a lot of payments come in as a result.

Mrs. Westall inquired as to how many notices were sent and Mr. Simpson responded just one notice regular mail. She also inquired which cost the county the most - the ad or the mailing, and Mr. Simpson responded it was the ad.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERT ROBINSON, Clark County

Mr. Robinson advised the Committee he sponsored the drafting of AB 643 at the request of the former Editor of the Las Vegas Review Journal, John Cahlan, and read into the record a letter he had received from Mr. Cahlan, dated April 4, 1979, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof. Mr. Robinson then proceeded to read the total payments paid to Clark County newspapers for legal ads in 1978, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof. Mr. Robinson stated the useless publication of the assessment rolls is a tremendous expense and he mentioned the figure of \$74,000 in Clark County, and he felt he would like to see the money spent on additional police protection. Mr. Robinson mentioned the public's right to know; however, he stated, it doesn't mean the government is obligated to pay for them to be informed.

JOE JACKSON, representing Nevada State Press Assn.

Mr. Jackson stated both Bills must be regarded as one more of many attempts before the current session of the Nevada Legislature to draw a cloak of secrecy around governmental operations of many kinds, and, if allowed to succeed, these attempts would be detrimental to the public, to public bodies and institutions, to public officers and, ultimately, to those who would deprive the public of the right to know. Mr. Jackson read from a prepared text into the record, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof. Mr. Jackson stated the Nevada State Press Association urgently requests that the Bills be given no further consideration.

CAROL PRINGLE, Lovelock Review-Miner

Mrs. Pringle stated she concurred in Mr. Jackson's statements concerning both Bills. She stated she did feel it was an incentive to get people's taxes paid on time. She advised the Committee in a way the county is losing money because they are still billed for the advertisement of the whole publication. She stated it was a good way for people to determine if they are being taxed fairly and are concerned. She advised the county out-of-state people do read the Review-Miner and subscriptions have increased specifically for the tax list. She stated she couldn't see any reason why it couldn't be published three times or even less as it is mainly a reminder to the taxpayers who are delinquent.

Mr. Bergevin commented that the people in the small counties use the assessment list as a Bible to see if they have been assessed properly, if their neighbor's been assessed properly, and if they have been treated equally. He stated it was the one small thing people can do by themselves without having to hire an attorney or research the records of the Assessor to see if they have indeed been assessed fairly. He stated he felt it was a good idea that the lists be published.

Mr. Bedrosian recapped what he felt was the situation: even if the person comes in and pays the delinquent tax and their names are taken out of the publication they still have to pay the whole four weeks for the county, and Mrs. Pringle responded that was correct. Mr. Bedrosian commented further that the county was getting a windfall in that case because the paper does not bill the county, and Mrs. Pringle responded that was the case.

HANK GREENSPUN, Editor, Las Vegas Sun

BRIAN GREENSPUN

Mr. Hank Greenspun advised the Committee the purpose of printing tax assessment rolls and legal notices is not to give subsidy or revenue or income to newspapers and is probably the last purpose or function. He stated the primary purpose was the public's right to know. He stated there were now 120,000 home owners in Clark County, plus businesses of all kinds, and it would be difficult to post a notice at the Courthouse and have 120,000 property owners go down on the same day with their cars to look up, and go through, the tax assessments. He cited the example of a small West Las Vegas Hotel some years ago who had gotten hold of a tax assessment book and learned from it that his Hotel, small in size, was assessed double the Frontier Hotel on the Strip.

Brian Greenspun advised the Committee he was a member of the Board of the Nevada State Press Association and agreed with the remarks of Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Getto directed a statement to Mr. Hank Greenspun taking exception to remarks made by Mr. Greenspun to the effect that Mr. Greenspun condemned the legislators, indicating they were operating in secrecy, and the fact that Mr. Greenspun did not mention what has happened in the last eight or ten years. He stated that he (Mr. Getto) and Mr. Dini were in the Legislature 14 years and both have seen a tremendous change in the openness, and he (Mr. Getto) supported the open meeting law and the people's right to know, He took exception to Mr.

Greenspun's admonishment that they were "pulling out another peg" but wanted to know about all the pegs the legislators put in.

LYNNE FRANTZ*, Adver. Dir., Nev. State Journal
and Reno Evening Gazette

Mr. Frantz stated as far as AB 643 was concerned publishing the assessment rolls becomes a public audit and gives the taxpayer an opportunity to determine fair tax practices and tax comparisons.

Chairman Dini advised the Committee he would accept a motion on AB 612 and AB 643.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

AB 612 - Mr. Jeffrey moved INDEFINITELY POSTPONE; seconded by Mr. Harmon, and unanimously carried.

AB 643 - Mr. Bergevin moved INDEFINITELY POSTPONE; seconded by Mr. Jeffrey, and unanimously carried.

Chairman Dini announced they would not have time to process AB 609 this morning but Mr. Russell McDonald had a suggestion in regard to a group of amendments the Charter Committee and the City Council agreed to. Mr. McDonald suggested getting the amendments drafted and get a reprint on it and take it up on Monday evening, at 5:30 p.m., during a general work session.

AB 606 - PROVIDES FOR FINANCING OF MUNICIPAL
ASSESSMENT DISTRICTS WITHOUT ISSUANCE
OF BONDS

JAY MILLIGAN, City Manager, Sparks, Nevada

Mr. Milligan advised the Committee on a number of occasions in Sparks they would like to put together small assessment districts where the property owners are perfectly willing to pay their share of the assessments but would like the City to co-ordinate the effort and do the engineering without going to the costly and time consuming process of holding public hearings and issuing the bonds.

*See Exhibit

Mr. Milligan stated the City of Sparks charges administrative fees of approximately 30-35% if they have to go through the long, drawn out, costly procedure. Mr. Milligan advised the Committee that the City of Las Vegas had some concerns and would propose two amendments: one being raising, or removing, of the \$150,000 cap and changing the two-thirds requirement of approval to a 50% majority.

Mr. Craddock asked for some specific examples where there would be the most need for this type of vehicle and the response was they have a street now where there are three property owners involved and two of them have agreed to pay about 80% of the improvements and if they went through the regular assessment procedure it would take probably a year; the total cost of the improvements in the situation were about \$80,000 and the cost of going through the district would probably amount to \$20-30,000 additionally.

RON JACK, representing City of Las Vegas

Mr. Jack advised the Committee they have two problems with the Bill; one is the requirement of the two-thirds consent. He stated even though under the statute they are not required to do an actual survey they have done it, and in 15 years they have never had a two-thirds response to the questionnaire let alone saying "yes". He advised the second problem is the \$150,000 limit. He stated it's frightening how little \$150,000 will buy and, recently, the average cost of a district in Las Vegas has been between \$300 - \$400,000. Mr. Jack read from a prepared text into the record, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Chairman Dini asked Mr. Jack about the affect of the cap and the General Fund and if there was any problem with that. Mr. Jack responded right now they were not putting General Fund money into special assessment districts.

IRENE PORTER, Executive Dr. So. Nev. Home Builders Assn.

Miss Porter advised the Committee the Association supported AB 606 with the amendment that the \$150,000 provision be increased to at least \$500,000 or more, and the two-thirds required vote be changed to fifty-one per cent.

G.P. ETCHEVERRY, Nevada League of Cities

Mr. Etchevery advised in the smaller cities they use the fifty-one and seventy-five percent figures. He stated they concur with the amendments and AB 606.

The testimony was concluded on AB 606.

Chairman Dini asked Mr. Jeffrey to study AB 606 and report back Monday evening at the work session.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the same was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Shatzman
Assembly Attache

AB 643
4/4/79

Hon. Robert Robinson
State Assemblyman
Legislative Bldg.
Carson City Nevada.

Dear Bob:

In regard to AB 643 which would repeal requirements to publish or mail property tax assessment rolls, it seems to me that the main point, which recently emphasized in a local publication has been entirely overlooked. refer to sub-section b of Section 2 of the bill which states "To cause su lists and valuations to be printed and published once on or before January 1 of each fiscal year....."

This routine has been a part of the newspaper business for scores of year and has been used by the smaller papers of the state as the bonanza which allowed them to exist for another year. However, in at least two sounties and probably three, that "bonanza" is no longer necessary and now is cost ing the taxpayers thousands of dollars and putting cash in the till of those newspapers who no longer need it. I refer especially to the newspap entities in Washoe and Clark counties and, perhaps, Douglas.

The last taxpayers' list which graced the three papers in Las Vegas was s large that the delivery boys had to make two or three trips to complete their routes. The publication costs must have been monumental and the prs- fit to the papers enormous.

I spent many, many years in the newspaper business and I believe I know something about the finances of same. I can see where the papers in the smaller counties still need this subsidy because it does, in truth, carry them from one year to another. However, as far as the papers of Washoe an Clark are concerned, the need has long since departed and now is a burden on the taxpayers which is adding to that which soon will bbeak his back.

I firmly believe that some method can be found (it has been done in other cases over the years) where the larger newspapers no longer receive this "bonanza" each year. In addition, the county receives little or no bene- fit from the publications because there aren't two people in a hundred who read the list, especially now since it covers a myriad of pages.

Might I suggest that sub-section b of Section 2 of AB 643, be amended to correct a situation which is costing the taxpayers thousands of dollars for which they receive little, if any, benefits.

Best wishes,


John F. Cahlan

Total amts. Paid to Clark County Newspapers
for legal Ad's 1978 f.y.

	7/1/78	7/1/79
Review Journal.	\$ 66,607	\$ 67,099
Sun	73,245	56,324
Valley Times	11,427	9,789
Zenoff Publications	17,741	16,434
	<u>\$ 169,022</u>	<u>\$ 149,646</u>

Amounts Paid to publish tax roll:

	7/1/78	7/1/79
Review Journal	\$ 26,951	\$ 30,762
Sun ^{85,000}	26,951	30,762
Valley Times	5,989	6,535
Zenoff	5,506	6,062
	<u>\$ 65,397</u>	<u>\$ 74,121</u>

Projected 7-1-79 Legal \$ 192,000⁰⁰



Nevada State Press Association

April 11, 1979

Joe Jackson, .
2375 South Arlington Ave.
Reno, Nevada 89509

Statement of the Nevada State Press Association
relative to Assembly Bill 643, before the Assembly
committee on Government Affairs. *A-130 AB 612 x*

*AB 643
4/11/79*

Assembly Bill 643 must be regarded as one more of many attempts before the current session of the Nevada Legislature to draw a cloak of secrecy around governmental operations of many kinds. If allowed to succeed, these attempts will be detrimental to the public, to public bodies and institutions, to public officers and ultimately to those who would deprive the public of the right to know.

The bill repeals the requirement that property tax assessment rolls be published, or that lists be mailed to the taxpayers. True, the provision of the present law that whenever property is appraised or reappraised, the county assessor is required to provide written notice of the appraisal to the property owner. But, that's the end of it - no one other than the single taxpayer knows the amount of his assessment.

Assembly bill 643 also retains the requirement that a list of delinquent taxpayers be published in a newspaper of general circulation once a week for four consecutive weeks. However, another bill before this committee, Assembly Bill 612, requires that instead of publishing delinquent tax lists in the local newspaper, the notice of delinquency is merely sent to the taxpayer, and that's the end of it, so far as the public is concerned.

And what about the public, if either of these measures passes? If Assembly Bill 643 is approved, the general public will be deprived of many rights. Foremost among them is a criterion for how the county assessor is doing his job. He also loses out on a right to compare his assessment with that of his neighbors, or friends, or acquaintances. Did the assessor give him a fair shake? He'll never know unless he can compare by reading the printed roll. So where legislatures in most states are more and more moving into the light of openness in all governmental dealings, Nevada's Legislature is being asked to ring down the curtain on open government.

Assembly Bill 643 retains the provision that the county assessor post on the front door of the courthouse and publish in a newspaper a notice to the effect that the tax roll is completed an open for inspection by interested persons. This might possibly work in a few of the smaller counties. But can you imagine the confusion that would be caused if taxpayers in Las Vegas and Reno decided to visit the assessor's office and inspect the assessment rolls? The office simply wouldn't have time to accommodate them, and those who succeeded in getting a look would be jostled, perhaps confused, and never accomplish what they set out to do. How much better it would be if they could read the assessment roll in their local newspaper and decide on what action, if any, they should take!

Assembly bill 612 deprives many persons of their right to know which of their neighbors aren't paying their taxes. It isn't just a matter of some neighbor gleefully poking his nose in someone's business. There's a grave deficiency in not letting the public know. For instance, how is a banker to know that a taxpayer who has borrowed money on the property being taxed isn't meeting his obligations to the county treasurer? Certainly, the bank will not know, if AB 612 is passed,

Nowhere is there a provision for notifying the banker, or any other creditor. The notice is simply sent to the taxpayer telling him he had better pay up, or else, and that's the end of it. How is the merchant who extends credit to know that his customer isn't able to, or doesn't want to, pay his taxes? That covers a pretty broad field. The list could go on, and on.

The delinquent tax list has been an institution throughout the counties of Nevada and has proven a boon to county coffers. And publishing the assessment rolls has also been helpful. Both lists are extremely well read. The delinquent list prompts many a taxpayer to pay his bill, where merely receiving a notice would fall far short of this goal. The notice could easily be disregarded, end up on the bottom of the pile on a cluttered desk. Also, considering the cost of postage these days, publishing the list could be the least expensive way.

It is reported that county commissioners who have requested these two bills say they "want to save the county money." Publishing the assessment roll costs 35 cents a line, and publishers are allowed to charge less, and often do, if there's a good reason. How deletion of the delinquent lists will save the county money is a mystery, since publication doesn't cost the county one penny. Costs are charged to the wayward taxpayer. It's against the law to charge the county for such publication.

There has been talk by some county officials, and city officials as well, that they are "tired of subsidizing the newspapers." Ladies and gentlemen, Nevada's press does not feel it is being subsidized by being paid to print public notices which are the only way to let the people know what is going on in their government. With the 35 cents a line limitation, newspapers are hard pressed to break even. And the price drops to 25 cents for the second insertion and 20 cents a line for the third and all subsequent insertions. One of the costs the newspaper absorbs in printing public notices, or legals, is that of proofreading.

A newspaper might be able to get by with a typographical error in a news story, an editorial, or even an advertisement, but the public notice is sacred. Many newspapers, especially the larger ones in our state, feel it is necessary to hire extra proofreaders just to take care of the legals. In fact, the proof is read in a room separate from the proofreaders bank in the backshop.

No, our newspapers are in no way being subsidized when they are paid to print public notices. They are carrying out their role in serving the public officials in meeting their requirements to let the public know what they are doing and how well they are doing their jobs. Since the early days in England newspapers have been doing this job in the face of handicaps such as those AB ~~632xax~~ 643 and AB 612 would impose.

The Nevada State Press Association urgently requests that this Assembly Committee on Government Affairs give these obnoxious bills no further consideration.

-JRJ-

Nevada State Journal

RENO EVENING GAZETTE

Pulitzer Prize Winning Gannett Newspapers

April 11, 1979

AB 643
4/11/79

Testimony before the Committee on Government Affairs
Joe Dini
RE: AB 643

Chairperson and members of the committee:

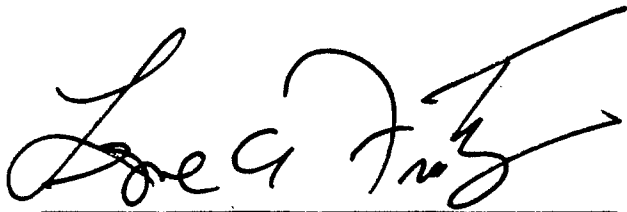
I'm Lynne Frantz, Advertising Director from the Nevada State Journal/Reno Evening Gazette, and I'm here to discuss aspects of the consequences if AB 643 passes the current session of the legislature and repeals the requirement to publish or mail property tax assessment rolls.

Publishing the assessment rolls becomes a public audit. It gives the taxpayer an opportunity to determine fair tax practices and tax comparisons. One of the major reasons our neighbor to the West has had frequent scandals and assessors going to jail is that California has no requirement to publish the tax rolls. It opens the door for corrupt practices in commercial assessment and political practices in residential assessment. When the tax assessment rolls are published, everyone has an equal opportunity to determine that all property is assessed fairly.

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A further benefit is that publishing the assessment rolls reduces the number of appeals, which in turn reduces taxes.

Your consideration is appreciated.



Lynne A. Frantz
Advertising Director

LAF:kim

10606
4/11/79

EXHIBIT

AB 606

The intent of AB 606 is good in that it allows local financing of improvement districts, but there are several restrictions in the bill which the City of Las Vegas questions.

The major problem we see is the 2/3 majority consent required in order to finance a district in this manner. Current NRS provisions for improvement districts require a public hearing, and if a majority of the effected property owners do not protest, the district may be created. Under this method, we have probably had around five out of some 150 districts stopped through protest.

Basic apathy, I'm afraid, precludes ever being able to obtain the 2/3 majority AB 606 requires. Although statute does not require an actual "survey vote" of all effected property owners, for public relations reasons our city has mailed such a survey to the property owners for the last 15 years, and we have never been able to get 2/3 of the people to answer the survey, much less agree on anything. A more realistic return of a typical survey would be:

100	mailed out
- 5	returned undeliverable
<u>95</u>	
-40	don't care
<u>55</u>	
-15	against anything
<u>40</u>	
-15	didn't get around to answering
<u>25</u>	returned yes.

It might be well to emphasize that in order to even get a return as outlined above, we do considerably more than the law requires in the way of public relations. This is following a full letter of explanation, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and usually many phone conversations. All the property owner has to do is check a block and sign.

A second problem we see is the \$150,000 limit. Over the past year, the City has created around 11 assessment districts, only one of which fell below the \$150,000 limit. It's frightening how little \$150,000 will buy, and recently the average cost of a district in Las Vegas has been between \$300 - \$400,000. I would respectfully recommend that any monetary limit be removed altogether; if a city has the money to cover the cost of a project, it should have the leeway to finance it in this manner in lieu of issuing bonds. This is particularly important since such alternate financing eliminates the 1/2 to 5% fee charged by bond attorneys for their services.

~~The third point I would like to call to your attention is the Section 4 requirement that if short-term financing is used, the loan must be repaid from the special assessments made. Short-term loans are made on a 3-5 year basis while payments for assessment districts stretch over 10 years. If this committee favors short-term financing for assessment districts, a more workable method for repayment will have to be found.~~

