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March 19, 2003

Chairman Wendell Williams
C/O Nevada Assembly
401 S. Carson City St.,
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Chairman Wendell Williams,

The Assembly Education Committee adjourned on March 17, 2003, without hearing all the speakers. One of the questions posed to me and not satisfactorily addressed to the committee, was whether or not, the math portion of the proficiency exam fairly evaluated what seniors had studied in math. I would like to address that subject if given the chance. I have the Harcourt Educational Measurement data of what mathematics contents are evaluated on the math proficiency exam given in the state of Nevada.

As reported by Harcourt, 20 of 60 math proficiency questions regard geometry & measurement, and 16 items test student knowledge of statistics & probability. Geometry is offered as a full year course of study in high school, but is not required for graduation even though one third of the test covers geometry. Probability and statistics is not offered as a high school course, yet over a quarter of the test deals with this subject. The students are saying they are being tested on math subjects they do not know. Maybe, with over fifty percent of our seniors still failing the math proficiency, there is some cause to believe them.

I thought the idea behind the NHSPE was to insure a basic level of functioning reading, writing and math before we graduated our seniors. While few students are having problems with the reading and writing proficiency, they are routinely failing the math. What we have are students meeting the four year requirements for graduation, but we then step forward and tell seniors they cannot go to college, join the military, or go into many skilled career fields because they did not pass a four hour exit exam.

I realize life is not always fair, but the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination, as now written, is testing most students in math subjects they do not need for graduation and may never use again the rest of their lives. Students are stressing out over this. Some are just flat giving up and dropping out. Other motivated students, breakdown and cry at the knowledge they have let down their parents and may have no chance at the American dream.

While Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani and I are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, she is dead set on target with AB 179. AB 179 corrects a serious legislative error and would make the proficiency test what it should have been all along - a check to insure our students are leaving high school with the basic skills needed to be productive citizens. Nevertheless, we still have to address the dichotomy between what math

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SUBMITTED BY: CHRIS GALYAN

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subjects students need for graduation, and what math skills they need to be tested on in a math proficiency exam.

Sincerely,

Chris Galyeon

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cc: Assembly Education Committee
Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani



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