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**Senate Committee on Government Affairs
Public Comment on SB 279 – April 2, 2003**

Madam Chair, members of the Committee:

I am Jim Slade from Gardnerville, and I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 279. I speak on my own behalf and as a member of the Sustainable Growth Initiative Committee. To some degree I also feel that I speak for the more than 5000 voters who signed our petition (a record in Douglas County), and the more than 8800 voters who voted in favor of our initiative last November when it passed.

This bill is directed only at legislation or initiatives that would seek to limit growth. It is shameless pandering to special interest groups to the detriment of the general public. It is an over-reaction to the success of the Sustainable Growth Initiative in Douglas County. As Mary Walker stated when she introduced this bill on March 12: "It was actually a constituent request, which grew out of the Douglas County Slow Growth Initiative." Obviously, she meant the "Sustainable Growth Initiative," which was so named because the growth rate would be sustainable for many years to come, consistent with our limited natural resources, particularly water, as opposed to our recent growth rate, which is neither desirable, nor sustainable, nor consistent with our Master Plan.

The development community outspent us many times over in an attempt to defeat SGI. They had the support of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners and District Attorney. Yet the will of the people prevailed, and SGI passed. Now they have turned to state legislation as a way to try to prevent this type of initiative by our group or any similar grass-roots organization. This is unconscionable.

This bill would impose significant additional burdens on any initiative seeking to limit growth. It is neither necessary, nor wise, nor well-reasoned. Its sole intended effect is to discourage use of the initiative process on any attempt to limit growth. It is a sad attempt to intrude state legislation unnecessarily into local issues.

Fortunately for us, the right to initiative petition is guaranteed by Article 19 of the Nevada Constitution. This bill is a threat to that constitutional right. It is insulting to the democratic process, and an affront to the majority of voters in Douglas County who supported SGI. It is a bill that would benefit a special interest group to the detriment of the majority of citizens of our state. At this time, when our troops are overseas fighting for freedom and liberty for all, this bill is an assault on our constitutionally-guaranteed liberties here at home.

I strongly urge you not to support SB 279. Thank you.