

NEVADA YOUTH LEGISLATURE:
ANNUAL REPORT
2015-2016



OVERVIEW

The 2015–2016 year for the Nevada Youth Legislature was filled with hands-on experiences for the new Youth Legislators. This first year of the two-year appointment was dedicated to training and educating the Youth Legislators so that they would be able to carry out their duties to represent the youth of their district with the utmost efficiency and effectiveness. This included the requirement that each Youth Legislator form and hold at least one meeting with their District Youth Advisory Council (DYAC), which can engage up to two students from each high school in that district. In lieu of a DYAC meeting during the first year, the Youth Legislators could conduct a town hall meeting and schedule the DYAC meeting for the second year of their terms. In addition, the Youth Legislators were assigned the responsibility of testifying before a public decision-making body.

The main focus of the 2015–2016 year was to train and educate the Youth Legislators in leadership and communications skills, which will benefit them during the second year of their terms. Through these trainings, the Youth Legislators obtained valuable education that will help them make educated decisions when they process their bill draft request (BDR) for the 2017 Legislative Session.

In conclusion, the 2015–2016 year was marked by the rapid growth of the Nevada Youth Legislature program and the individuals who have participated. The Youth Legislators learned, through training and interactive experiences, how the government is deeply integrated into their daily lives. They also learned to give the youth of Nevada a voice in the legislative process.

Submitted by:

Chintan Bhatt, Chair
Nevada Youth Legislature, 2015–2016

2015 SUMMER TRAINING

August 13–14, 2015

On August 13, 2015, the Youth Legislators from southern Nevada were flown to Reno to participate in a two-day training session in Carson City, Nevada, led by Senator Valerie Wiener (Ret.), Chair, Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL) Foundation Board of Directors (*Nevada Revised Statutes* [NRS] 219A.300). The training was intended to educate the Youth Legislators on how to perform the duties of their appointment to the NYL. After exchanging greetings and pleasantries at the Plaza Hotel, the Youth Legislators were escorted to the Legislative Building by the Legislative Police. At that time, the Youth Legislators received photo IDs and training binders.

While getting to know each other in the Senate Caucus Room, the Youth Legislators were assigned roles that they would complete throughout the two-day training, ranging from participating in a live radio interview, giving mock public testimony on bills, or chairing mock committees. They then moved to the front of the Legislative Building, accompanied by former NYL Chair, Grant Gabriel, to participate in some icebreaker activities and to get to know one another and share information about themselves.

The Youth Legislators then moved to the Senate Chamber for the official welcoming, led by Senator Wiener. They were sworn in by The Honorable, James W. Hardesty, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Nevada, and shown inspirational welcome videos from United States Senators, Dean Heller (R-Nevada) and Harry Reid (D-Nevada). Grant Gabriel and former NYL Vice Chair, Katherine Krolicki, informed the Youth Legislators about their roles and responsibilities as representatives of the youth in their senatorial districts.

During lunch, Jeanette K. Belz, J.K. Belz & Associates, Inc.; Alex Bybee, former NYL Chair; and Liane Lee, Washoe County, shared their personal experiences and stories of their roles in the lobbying process.

In the afternoon, the Youth Legislators learned about decorum, how a bill becomes a law, and the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, led by Senator Wiener.

The Youth Legislators then participated in their first experience of the legislative process with mock committee hearings. The mock committee was comprised of Senator Becky Harris, Senator Wiener, Assemblywoman Amber Joiner, and Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart. The three bills heard in the mock committee were: Senate Bill 414 (Chapter 338, *Statutes of Nevada 2013*), S.B. 237 (Chapter 244, *Statutes of Nevada 2011*), and S.B. 135 (2009 Session).

After the mock committee meeting, the Youth Legislators returned to the Plaza Hotel. Shortly thereafter, the Legislative Police drove them to the Governor's Mansion, where they had dinner and lively discussions with Chief Justice Hardesty, Scott Anderson, Chief Deputy, Office of the Secretary of State; and Brian Krolicki, Former Lieutenant Governor. Following dinner, the Youth Legislators had the opportunity to relax in what became a bowling and bonding activity at the Carson Lanes.

The second day of the training, the Youth Legislators took the lead in their own mock committee meeting, during which they heard S.B. 220 (2015 Session) and S.B. 464 (Chapter 288, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*). Governor Brian Sandoval visited with the Youth Legislators for about 20 minutes and gave each Youth Legislator a commemorative coin.

Later in the afternoon, the Youth Legislators were briefed about the bill drafting process. In addition, they learned how to narrow down issues to determine particular bill draft ideas. They gathered as small groups to brainstorm issues and later presented their ideas to the entire group. In this second step of the issue-narrowing process, the Youth Legislators determined their top 10 issues.

Following the issue-narrowing exercise, the Youth Legislators returned to the Senate Chamber to participate in a mock floor session. During this time, the five measures heard in the mock committee led by three Nevada State legislators and two Youth Legislators were debated and voted upon by all the Youth Legislators, who voted at the desks of their appointing Senators. Former Lieutenant Governor Krolicki presided over the floor session.

The Youth Legislators then walked to Red's Old 395 Grill for lunch and an official presentation of their certificates of appointment and business cards. Following lunch, the Youth Legislators returned to the Legislative Building, where three Youth Legislators participated in a radio interview with Nevada Public Radio (88.9 KNPR), Las Vegas, Nevada.

As their last activity before departing to return to their homes, the Youth Legislators attended the annual meeting of the NYL Foundation Board of Directors.

MEETINGS/TRAINING SESSIONS

September 15, 2015

After the meeting was called to order and public comment was made available (no one testified), the election of officers was held. After nominations and one-minute speeches by candidates, Youth Legislator Chintan Bhatt was elected Chair, and Youth Legislator Zachary Bell-Nance was elected Vice Chair. Following the elections, Senator Wiener reviewed the two-year training binder with the Youth Legislators.

An important part of the NYL program involves Senators and Assembly Members sitting as panelists during each training session. They talk about the particular training topics and answer questions posed by Senator Wiener and the Youth Legislators. The focus of September's training was the "Role of Advisory Groups in Legislative Districts." Legislative panelists included: Senator Patricia Farley, Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Assemblyman Nelson Araujo, and Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart.

In addition, Rose Asaf, former NYL Chair (by telephone from New York) and, Daniel Waqar, former NYL Vice Chair (attending at the witness table in Las Vegas) participated as a NYL Alumni panel to highlight effective ways to recruit DYAC members, how to operate a DYAC, the importance of making interconnections and helping each other, and the value of listening. Chair Bhatt and Vice Chair Bell-Nance chaired a simulation of a DYAC meeting. After interactive discussion of highlights of the training, public comment was requested; however, there was none.

October 8, 2015

Following the call to order by Chair Bhatt and public comment (no one testified), Senator Wiener reviewed deadlines for required outside NYL activities, including the appointment of members to each Youth Legislator's DYAC, as well as the deadlines for holding DYAC meetings, town hall meetings, and public testimony before a public decision-making body. Senator Wiener also confirmed that the Open Meeting Law does not apply to DYAC meetings.

To share their insights about "Mastering Media Relations," which was the focus of the meeting, former members of the NYL, Jonathan Oglesby (by telephone from Utah) and Tierra Patmavanu (by telephone from California), shared their own experiences and insights about working with the media. Senator Wiener then delivered a presentation on how to work with the media and master media relations. Three Youth Legislators participated in mock media interviews. After interactive discussion of highlights of the training, public comment was requested; however, there was none.

November 9, 2015

The NYL convened for a training session about “Effective Listening Skills.” At the beginning of the training, the Youth Legislators were asked to discuss the progress of their required outside NYL activities.

Former Youth Legislators Laurel Cavallo (by telephone from California) and Ethan Foster (by telephone from Virginia) shared their insights about effective listening skills. Followed by, a panel of Legislators, which consisted of: Senator Kelvin D. Atkinson, Senator Becky Harris, Assemblywoman Amber Joiner, and Assemblyman Jim Wheeler. After the two panels, Senator Wiener discussed the key components of effective listening. This was followed by three interactive listening scenarios involving two Youth Legislators in the north and four Youth Legislators in the south. After interactive discussion of highlights of the training, the training was adjourned.

February 11, 2016

The NYL convened for a training session on public speaking.

Senator Scott T. Hammond, Senator Patricia (Pat) Spearman, Assemblyman Edgar R. Flores, and Assemblyman Philip (P.K.) O’Neill addressed several questions about “Power Presentations,” which was the focus of this training. Former Youth Legislators Madeleine Welch and Ken Brooke, participating at the witness table from Carson City, shared their thoughts and advice on how to give effective presentations.

Senator Wiener shared her insights about power presentations and effective public speaking. Four Youth Legislators participated in mini-speech scenarios and simulating experiences in a DYAC meeting, a town hall meeting, and a public testimony. After interactive discussion of highlights of the training, the training was adjourned.

March 17, 2016 (Telephone Conference Call)

Though an optional activity, the Youth Legislators participated in a telephone conference call to discuss their DYAC meetings, town hall meetings, and public testimonies. Many of the Youth Legislators who participated in the conference call had successful DYAC and town hall meetings and concluded that these had helped in formulating BDR ideas. However, they shared their concerns about a lack of participation in DYACs. They expressed their frustrations about the lack of interest in some schools regarding applying for appointments to DYACs.

April 19, 2016

Vice Chair Bell-Nance called the meeting to order and asked for public comment (there was none).

Focusing on the training objective, a Legislative panel discussed “Negotiation Skills.” The panel included: Senator Joseph P. Hardy, Senator Mark A. Manendo, Assemblyman Randy Kirner, and Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson. In addition, Miranda Rosen, former NYL Chair, (by telephone from New Jersey) and Mitchell Ragan, former NYL member, (attending at the witness table in Las Vegas) shared their thoughts and stories about using negotiation skills in their lives and in the legislative process.

Jeanette K. Belz, of J.K. Belz & Associates, Inc., led the training on negotiation skills. Four Youth Legislators were selected to participate in four interactive scenarios.

Senator Wiener discussed the content of the NYL Annual Report (to be prepared by the NYL Chair, pursuant to NRS 219A.210). Several Youth Legislators expressed what information they wanted to be included in the Annual Report. After interactive discussion of the highlights of the training, public comment was requested; however, there was none.