

Nevada Youth Legislature:  
Annual Report  
2016-2017



Submitted by:

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## OVERVIEW

The 2016-2017 year of the Nevada Youth Legislature (NYL) marked the second year of service for Youth Legislators appointed in 2015. During the first year of their terms (2015-2016), Youth Legislators learned skills, processes, and responsibilities of their appointed public service. These included, but were not limited to: constituent outreach, listening, speaking, negotiating, and message accountability, along with organizing and presenting town hall meetings, District Youth Advisory Council (DYAC) meetings, public testimonies, and more. During this second year, Youth Legislators took an active role in the processes they had learned so much about the year before. Through various forms of constituent outreach, including their DYACs and town hall meetings, Youth Legislators gained insight about issues that were important to the youth in their districts, which allowed their youth constituents to have a voice and Youth Legislators to represent their ideas in State policy-making.

The NYL took an active role in the legislative process through its opportunity to submit one bill for consideration to the Nevada Legislature. This measure, Senate Bill 108, would create a subcommittee to study the details of a required curriculum about criminal laws that affect under-18-year-olds, which would be taught in social studies classes in grades 9 to 12.

Overall, the 2016-2017 year enabled Youth Legislators to actively apply all the skills they cultivated during the first year of their term. Most important, Youth Legislators had the opportunity to represent the youth of their districts by taking an active role in the legislative process through the life of the bill that they were statutorily authorized to present to the Legislature.

## **TRAINING**

### **September 12, 2016**

On September 12, 2016, the NYL conducted an off-year, one-day training for all members of the NYL. (The full two-day training is held in August of legislative session years.) The day comprised an overview of the bill draft request (BDR) process, which included input from legislators representing the four legislative caucuses. Following this, Youth Legislators learned how a bill becomes a law, which was followed by a briefing on the history of NYL legislative proposals to the Nevada Legislature, as well as those measures that were carried by Senators at the request of their Youth Legislators. To enrich this experience, Youth Legislators divided into four work groups and met, as smaller groups via Skype, with NYL Alumni Mentors/Trainers, who had key roles in past NYL legislative efforts. Participating NYL Alumni and their locations were: Grant Gabriel (Yale University), Haley Johnson (Carson City), Evan Gong (University of California Berkeley), and Rose Asaf (New York University). During these work sessions, Youth Legislators had the opportunity to discuss the logistics of the legislative process from the perspective of former Youth Legislators who could discuss details and their own experiences during their terms.

After closing remarks by Senator Valerie Wiener (Retired), Chair, NYL Foundation Board, Youth Legislators celebrated with the traditional carrot cake.

### **October 26, 2016**

During this meeting, Youth Legislators elected Spencer Lang as NYL Chair and Brooklyn Darmody as NYL Vice Chair for the 2016-2017 portion of their two-year appointment period.

Prior to this meeting, Youth Legislators had submitted their ideas for a BDR, along with the need the BDR addresses and how the BDR resolves this need. During this meeting, Youth Legislators presented their BDRs to the entire NYL, and Youth Legislators discussed, deliberated, and debated these measures. In the first round of consideration, Youth Legislators narrowed the consideration to seven possible BDRs. Additional debate and deliberation continued, with sponsors responding to questions from their NYL colleagues. By the end of the meeting, the NYL selected two BDRs as finalists to be considered at the November meeting when each BDR would receive full legislative hearings. One of the two measures, proposed by Youth Legislator Tricia Pomeroy, would require internships in high school; the other measure, proposed by Youth Legislator Olivia Yamamoto, would require instruction around sexual consent in high school health classes.

### **November 15, 2016**

During this meeting, the NYL was tasked with deciding between the two BDRs that were selected during the October meeting. The NYL heard extended presentations of each BDR.

Youth Legislator Pomeroy's BDR hearing involved several education professionals from both the Clark County School District and the Office of Workforce Innovation, as well as the nonprofit sector. She also detailed her own personal experience with internships to present the benefits of requiring an internship program in high schools.

Youth Legislator Yamamoto's BDR included representatives from the Clark County School District, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), and the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada.

After significant interaction with witnesses, the bill sponsors, and other Youth Legislators, the NYL voted to support Youth Legislator Yamamoto's BDR. At the suggestion of A.J. Delap, LVMPD's representative at the hearing, Youth Legislators decided to require the instruction in government classes and, possibly, focus on the responsibilities and consequences involved with behaviors that are already addressed in statute.

### **January 5, 2017**

This meeting began with a special and historic experience for Youth Legislators. Governor Brian Sandoval's representative, Rosa Mendez, Southern Nevada Outreach Coordinator, presented the NYL with a proclamation, honoring the NYL for its ten-year history in the Legislature and the State. In addition, Governor Sandoval proclaimed January 5, 2017, as "A Day in Honor of the Nevada Youth Legislature."

Following this ceremony, Youth Legislators engaged in a highly interactive conversation with a panel of legislators, representing both houses and both caucuses, as well as NYL alumni/trainers, about how to present, advocate for, and secure support for their legislative measure in the 2017 Legislative Session. This panel discussion was facilitated by Senator Valerie Wiener (Retired).

With these suggestions in mind, Youth Legislators then worked with Karly O'Krent, NYL Legal Counsel, on refining the language for the BDR to be submitted for introduction. Youth Legislators were able to glean answers to their concerns about a possible fiscal note and voted to approve the final bill language.

## **ANNUAL REUNION**

### **January 7, 2017**

As is the tradition of the NYL, reunions are hosted each January in both Las Vegas and Carson City. Senator Valerie Wiener (Retired), NYL Foundation Chair, and Zhan Okuda-Lim, NYL Foundation Board Member (also a former NYL Chair), attended the southern Nevada reunion at the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., in Las Vegas, and the northern Nevada reunion at the Legislative Building, from

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., in Carson City. During these reunions, both current Youth Legislators and NYL Alumni gathered to share their experiences with the program and the positive effect it has had on their lives and engagement in policy-making and public service. Just as important, they had the opportunity to socialize and initiate or renew their networking connections. Of course, this included celebrating with the traditional carrot cake.

## **ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION**

### **March 2017**

Though the NYL had no official activities this month, Youth Legislators demonstrated their commitment to the NYL by representing the program in various forums.

As required by law, the NYL participates in the selection of the youth member on the State Board of Education. To contribute to this conversation, Youth Legislators Megan Adamson, Kenadee Bailey, Francesca Bergeret-Simpson, Skyler Bradley, and Caroline Graham participated in the evaluation process.

In addition, in March, NYL Chair Spencer Lang and NYL Alumnus Haley Johnson visited Carson City Middle School to make a presentation about the NYL Program.

On March 28, Youth Legislators Katie Hardung and Spencer Lang, along with NYL Program Facilitator, Tina Ashdown, welcomed a delegation of Mongolian Parliamentarians to the Nevada Legislature.

## **NYL'S SPECIAL DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE**

### **April 11, 2017**

Youth Legislators Skyler Bradley, Brooklyn Darmody, Samantha Ostrovsky, Nadia Christiane-Ozone, and Olivia Yamamoto traveled from Las Vegas with Senator Valerie Wiener (Retired) to participate in the NYL Special Day at the Legislature. Joining them in Carson City were Youth Legislators Emily Espinosa, Katie Hardung, Scott Harrison, Spencer Lang, and Josie Merritt.

Youth Legislators gathered for breakfast at Comma Coffee before attending the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs. In the committee meeting, Youth Legislators heard a bill to honor Sarah Winnemucca and experienced the committee passage of the bill. From there, Youth Legislators went to the Senate floor, where they sat with their appointing Senators during floor session and participated in the presentation of a Senate proclamation, honoring the tenth anniversary of the Nevada Youth Legislature program.

As is tradition, Youth Legislators enjoyed lunch at Red's Old 395 Grill, which was attended by a special guest, Rick Combs, Director, Legislative Counsel Bureau. Youth Legislators then walked back to the Legislative Building to attend the Assembly Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections. Following this, Youth Legislators attended the Senate Committee on Education to experience the work session process on their bill, S. B. 108.

Once S.B. 108 was passed, as amended, Youth Legislators went to the floor of the Assembly, where they sat with their Assembly Members and participated in the presentation of an Assembly proclamation, which honored the tenth anniversary of the Nevada Youth Legislature program. Immediately following this presentation, Youth Legislators had the special opportunity to hear a presentation by United States Congressman Ruben J. Kihuen, a former Nevada Assemblyman and State Senator, to a Joint Session of the Legislature.

This very busy day concluded with a celebration with carrot cake and the presentation of legislative pins, which were gifted to Youth Legislators by Rick Combs.

### **OPTIONAL CONFERENCE CALL**

#### **May 18, 2017**

Youth Legislators Skyler Bradley, Scott Harrison, Spencer Lang, Savannah Strott, and Olivia Yamamoto participated in an optional, though very important, telephone conference call on May 18. During this call they provided substantial input about the value of the NYL in their lives, including highlights and suggestions for the program going forward. This invaluable input will be included in program development for the 2017-2019 term.

### **SIGNING OF S.B. 108**

#### **May 24, 2017**

Governor Brian Sandoval signed S.B. 108 into law. This is the fourth NYL bill to become law since 2009.