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Las Vegas Review-Journal: Gibbons offers homilies, PLAN backs revenue

Feb. 8, 2010

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS: Gibbons to draw bottom line

Speech will suggest how to cut spending \$881.4 million

By Ed Vogel

Las Vegas Review Journal Capital Bureau

CARSON CITY -- Gov. Jim Gibbons loves to tell a story about how the recession has affected Nevada.

It goes like this: Nevada state government is like a family. Families across the state are sitting down at the dinner table and looking at their bills. Some they have to pay. Others they will postpone as long as possible. But the amount they can spend has dropped. They have to make sacrifices. They are lucky just to have jobs. Many people are standing in unemployment lines.

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The new development that Gibbons likely will mention tonight is an agreement by the mining industry to make an advance payment of as much as \$100 million in sales taxes to help the state get through the economic crisis. Mining made such an advance payment last year. Gibbons is a former mining lawyer and geologist.

The mining industry is facing a tax battle with the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, which is circulating a petition among registered voters that would dramatically increase taxes on gold and other minerals. But the initiative petition, if approved by voters in two elections, wouldn't bring in any new revenues until 2013.

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Las Vegas Review-Journal: PLAN and allies fight Las Vegas Water Grab

Pipeline receives go-ahead

Rural Nevadans vow to keep fighting



By Henry Brean

Preparations for the water pipeline to eastern Nevada will continue, and so will opposition to the multibillion-dollar project.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority board Thursday voted unanimously to forge ahead with the permit process for the agency's massive groundwater importation plan, which one day could deliver billions of gallons of groundwater a year to Las Vegas from as far as 300 miles away.

First, though, board members listened to dire warnings from the water authority's management team and counterarguments from critics of the scheme, including rural residents whose land and livelihoods lie in the path of the project.

The discussion lasted about four hours and drew more than 300 people to the board's meeting room in downtown Las Vegas.

The audience filled the room and a nearby overflow area, forcing a handful of people to watch the discussion remotely from the Clark County Government Center about a half mile down the street.

Snake Valley resident Margaret Pense couldn't help but cry as she addressed the board.

"I just wish there was a better way than to take the water from such a fragile community. We're the little guys. We're the Davids versus the Goliaths," she said, her voice breaking. "What's going to happen to me? I can't go anywhere else. I don't have a water right."

Longtime Baker motel owner Denise Coyle introduced the board to her young granddaughters, two from Baker and one from Las Vegas.

Coyle said the pipeline is about more than engineering and economics; it's a "moral and ethical choice."

"You have all of their futures in your hands. It will be them who feel the effects," she said.

Coyle's son, White Pine County Commissioner Gary Perea, read a resolution from the commission opposing the pipeline. Then he delivered a warning of his own: "To the people who support this project, no matter how much you want and need for that water to be there, it doesn't mean that it is."

Mixed in with the opposition were statements of support from developers, gaming executives and other valley business leaders.

The audience also included a large contingent of union construction workers, many of them wearing hard hats and safety vests. Their message to the board: Keep the water flowing, and put us to work on the pipeline.

Board members heard from 44 people in all.

Rancher Cecil Garland approached the podium in overalls and crusty old ball cap and quickly started quoting Shakespeare.

Garland went on to say that he has been working the land along the Nevada-Utah border for decades, and he knows one thing with certainty: "There is no surplus water in Snake Valley."

White Pine County resident Rick Spilsbury said the authority's plans for rural Nevada amount to "modern-day colonialism" and "socialism for the rich."

"I think it's as irresponsible as it can be. It doesn't make any sense to empty a natural basin to fill a man-made lake," said Spilsbury, a Western Shoshone Tribe member who blogs about environmental issues for a Web site called NoShootFoot.com.

"The world is watching," he said. "Maybe people will decide to gamble at an Indian casino rather than go to Las Vegas, which steals water from the Western Shoshone."

Not all of the criticism came from out of town.

Desert fish expert and retired UNLV professor Jim Deacon warned that the damaging effects of large-scale groundwater pumping could be felt in as many as 80 basins in Nevada, Utah and California, far beyond the network of monitoring wells the authority plans to set up.

Henderson green living consultant Steve Rypka said the water situation seems to be treated as an emergency when it comes to the pipeline but not when it comes to conservation.

"I see water waste everyday," he said. "It's just running down the gutter. It's insane."

The discussion began with a 45-minute presentation by water authority officials on the purpose and the history of the pipeline, which was born in the late 1980s when the Las Vegas Valley Water District filed for unappropriated groundwater across much of eastern and central Nevada.

In the almost two decades since, the project's scope has narrowed to six basins in Clark, Lincoln and White Pine counties.

The justification for building it also has changed. First it was about securing water to supply rapid growth in the Las Vegas Valley. Now authority officials consider it a safety net for the community, which gets 90 percent of its drinking water from the drought-stricken Colorado River.

Water authority Deputy General Manager Kay Brothers said if the drought continues at its current pace, Lake Mead could sink low enough to shut down one of the authority's two water intakes by 2013. The other intake could be in jeopardy just two years after that, she said.

The board voted 6-0 to proceed with preparations for the pipeline. County Commissioner Tom Collins left the meeting early and did not cast a vote.

This was not the board's final word on the pipeline. After obtaining all of the necessary federal permits and environmental clearances, the authority plans to put the project "on the shelf" for when the community needs it. When that day comes, it will be up to board members to decide whether to proceed with design and construction.

Water authority General Manager Pat Mulroy said she was "delighted" by the outcome of Thursday's vote, which she requested to reaffirm the board's support for the project.

"The meeting went extremely well. Everyone expressed their feelings and concerns in a polite and respectful way," Mulroy said.

Opponents were not surprised by the board's decision.

Bob Fulkerson is executive director of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, a liberal advocacy group that has come out against the pipeline. He called the effort to sway the vote "an exercise in futility" but said it was important for them to be there and be heard.

Asked what he thought of Thursday's meeting, Snake Valley rancher Dean Baker just smiled a little and shrugged.

"It was fine," he said, but it didn't really change anything. The work on the pipeline will keep going, and the people fighting it will keep on fighting. "We have to," Baker said.

Contact reporter Henry Breaan at hbreaan@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.

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Ely Times: Governor considers dumping mining deductions

Feb. 17, 2010

Governor may consider cuts to state's mining tax deduct

By BENJAMIN SPILLMAN
Ely Times Capital Bureau

Gov. Jim Gibbons would consider reducing the number of tax deductions available to the mining industry to help close a budget shortfall estimated at \$871 million, a spokesman said Monday.

"The governor is certainly open to adjusting the deductions that mining gets to take," said Gibbons spokesman Dai Burns. The administration calculates that eliminating some mining tax deductions could bring in an estimated \$25 million annually.

Such a proposal would not violate the governor's pledge to balance the budget without raising taxes, Burns said.

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Such talk about mining taxes is going on at the same time that a petition is being circulated by the Progressive Lee Alliance of Nevada.

The group is seeking a constitutional amendment to increase the mining tax rate and charge taxes against gross production instead of the current net proceeds tax.

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[Read the full Ely Times story here.](#)

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Las Vegas Review-Journal: PLAN launches mining tax initiative

Jan. 20, 2010

Group seeks higher tax on mining

Initiative petition filed to ask voters to support an increase

Michael Ginsburg, a community organizer for the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, on Tuesday files a copy of the group's initiative petition to adjust the state's mining tax with Terri Rogers at the Nevada Secretary of State's office in Las Vegas.



Calling Nevada's tax system "a tragedy" for children and the poor, an activist group will ask voters to stake a bigger claim in mining, one of the state's most politically entrenched industries.

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada on Tuesday filed an initiative petition to ask voters to amend the state constitution to include at least a 5 percent tax on gross proceeds of mines, as opposed to the current tax of no more than 5 percent of net proceeds.

The change, according to PLAN organizers, could raise as much as \$250 million annually that could be spent on schools, social services and health care. They say proceeds from gold totaled \$25.5 billion from 2000 to 2007 and mining companies paid \$125.3 million in taxes to the general fund, for a rate of one-half of 1 percent.

In contrast, PLAN says the poorest 20 percent of Nevadans pay 8.3 percent of their income in taxes.

"It is time for that to end. We need a restructuring, a fairness-based tax system here in Nevada," PLAN organizer Michael Ginsburg said.

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Read the complete RJ story [here](#).

Last Updated (Saturday, 06 February 2010)

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Las Vegas Review-Journal: PLAN "anti-capitalists," right-wingers claim

Jan. 20, 2010

EDITORIAL: More tax hikes?

Liberal group wants to shaft mining

Lobbyists for Nevada's mining industry entered the 2009 Legislature wearing bull's-eyes big enough to cover an op
Lawmakers were hunting for new revenues and many were convinced that profitable mining companies -- especial
digging up gold -- should have much bigger tax bills.

But much to the anguish of the greens and their friends in the tax-and-spend set, mining escaped Carson City with
take on any new, industry-specific levies.

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, an anti-capitalist group in relentless pursuit of "racial, social and er
justice," was mad enough to take the issue into its own hands. On Tuesday, the organization filed an initiative peti
more than triple mining taxes.

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Read the complete editorial [here](#).

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Las Vegas Review-Journal: Mining industry says "no" to Nevada needs

Feb. 9, 2010

Halt sought to mining petition

Group tries to stop effort to raise taxes on industry

By BENJAMIN SPILLMAN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

The trade association for Nevada's mining industry filed a lawsuit Tuesday to block a petition that would allow the state to raise taxes on mining.

The filing in District Court in Carson City by the Nevada Mining Association is in response to an initiative launched by the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, a group that advocates for "social, economic and environmental justice for Nevadans."

...

Launce Rake, a spokesman for PLAN, said the group is standing by the initiative because activists consider Nevada's tax system "a tragedy" for children and the poor.

"We're obviously reviewing it, but we believe our initiative is very well-written and will easily withstand this legal challenge," Rake said in response to the lawsuit.

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Feb. 08, 2010
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STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS: Gibbons to draw bottom line

Speech will suggest how to cut spending \$881.4 million

By ED VOGEL
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL CAPITAL BUREAU

CARSON CITY -- Gov. Jim Gibbons loves to tell a story about how the recession has affected Nevada.

It goes like this: Nevada state government is like a family. Families across the state are sitting down at the dinner table and looking at their bills. Some they have to pay. Others they will postpone as long as possible. But the amount they can spend has dropped. They have to make sacrifices. They are lucky just to have jobs. Many people are standing in unemployment lines.

Expect Gibbons to deliver a version of that story tonight when he makes a 20-minute, televised State of the State address to Nevada families about how the state government must reduce its spending by 20 percent:

State government must reduce spending by \$881.4 million between March and June 30, 2011, which is the end of the state's two-year budget cycle. Like families across Nevada, state government also must sacrifice.

Daniel Burns, Gibbons' communications director, said the governor tonight won't be mentioning all of the areas where he will propose cuts, but he will talk about some of them.

"He wants to share his ideology with the citizens. He will make all of his proposals known in the days ahead," Burns said.

So far, legislators have not even agreed with an initial cut list released by Gibbons that covers not even half of the projected deficit. They will hold a series of meetings this week to gather public opinion on Gibbons' proposed cuts and other ideas for cuts. Then Democratic legislators are expected to announce their own list of proposed cuts.

Gibbons will call a special legislative session for the week of Feb. 22, at which they all must agree on cuts that would be implemented as early as March. It might be a one-day session, like two special sessions in 2008 when the governor and legislative leaders agreed in advance on where to make cuts.

The new development that Gibbons likely will mention tonight is an agreement by the mining industry to make an advance payment of as much as \$100 million in sales taxes to help the state get through the economic crisis. Mining made such an advance payment last year. Gibbons is a former mining lawyer and geologist.

The mining industry is facing a tax battle with the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, which is circulating a petition among registered voters that would dramatically increase taxes on gold and other minerals. But the initiative petition, if approved by voters in two elections, wouldn't bring in any new revenues until 2013.

The governor also is expected tonight to tell officials from public schools and the Nevada System of Higher Education that he won't tell them where to cut their budgets, although he will tell them how much they must cut. Allowing the schools themselves to make the decisions will be good news to school administrators who have urged the governor to give them more flexibility.

If 10 percent cuts are ordered, that would mean cutting the higher education budget by \$147 million and the public schools budget by \$166 million.

Layoffs of at least 236 state workers and eliminating 362 unfilled state jobs also were on Gibbons' initial cut list.

On top of those cuts, Gibbons likely will propose reducing the salaries of all state employees by 6 percent, saving \$180 million a year, and cuts for public schools and higher education as well.

In his known cut list, the governor has proposed closing the 140-year-old Nevada State Prison in Carson City and reducing mental health services and payments to hospitals.

Look for Gibbons to propose early release for prisoners without violent felony backgrounds. And he might use \$90 million in federal funds to help close the budget gap.

But the known cut proposals don't come close to the \$881 million shortfall. Nevadans should be prepared for more dramatic reductions.

To paraphrase what Gibbons also has been saying: People have to get used to shrinking state government. State government as we know it now never will be the same.

State Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, D-Las Vegas, will follow Gibbons' speech with an expected 8-minute Democrat response.

At this time, Republican Gibbons and his traditional Democratic foes in the Legislature have called an uneasy truce.

Both have pledged the solution to the deficit won't include increases in taxes at a time when the state's unemployment rate is 13 percent. Nevada employers cut 118,000 jobs last year and are expected to whittle away another 90,000 in the next two years.

Assembly Speaker Barbara Buckley, more than anyone, has been trying to come up with a way to explain easily to people the gravity of the state's financial situation.

To give an example of the magnitude of an \$881 million shortfall, Buckley, D-Las Vegas, noted that if all 16,000 state employees were laid off -- something that no one has suggested -- state government still must trim another \$300 million to balance the budget.

The state employee total does not include teachers and other public school personnel, or university and community college faculty and staff. Their salaries largely are paid through state appropriations but controlled by elected boards that work independently of the Legislature and governor.

Buckley has said that Carson City isn't like Washington, D.C., where the solution to revenue deficits seems to be greater deficits.

The Nevada Constitution requires a balanced budget.

Contact Capital Bureau Chief Ed Vogel at evogel@reviewjournal.com or 775-687-3901.

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<http://www.lvrj.com/news/gibbons-to-draw-bottom-line-83787697.html>



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