

Facts about the Nevada Legislature

Size and Apportionment of the Nevada Legislature

The *Nevada Constitution* sets the maximum size of the Legislature at 75 legislators. It further provides that the Senate may not be less than one-third nor more than one-half the size of the Assembly. Since 1983, the Nevada Legislature has had 63 members, 21 in the Senate and 42 in the Assembly.

The *Constitution* requires the Legislature to adjust the boundaries of the legislative districts following each decennial census. Due to an impasse that arose when Governor Brian Sandoval vetoed the redistricting measures approved by the Nevada Legislature, the Legislature was unable to complete the legislative and congressional redistricting process during the 120-day regular session. Following a number of hearings, judicial briefs, motions, and pleas, District Court Judge James T. Russell, in First Judicial District Case *Guy et al. v. Miller*, appointed three Special Masters to accomplish redistricting. The court-approved maps include four congressional districts (an increase of one), while the size of the Nevada Legislature was retained at 63 members, 21 in the Senate and 42 in the Assembly.

For the first time in Nevada's redistricting history, all districts in both houses are single-member, and two Assembly districts are perfectly nested within each Senate district. The average population of the Assembly districts is 64,299 people (based on the 2010 U.S. Census). The Senate districts have an average population of 128,598 citizens. The State's population was just over 2.7 million in 2010.

There are now 15 Senate districts wholly within Clark County; 4 districts in the Washoe County/Carson City area, 1 of which includes five counties in western Nevada; and 2 rural districts. One rural district consists of Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, and Storey Counties. The other one consists of Elko, Eureka, Lincoln, White Pine, and parts of Nye and northern Clark Counties. The 42 Assembly districts include 30 districts wholly within Clark County, 8 districts in the Washoe County/Carson City/western Nevada area, and 4 Assembly districts within the 2 rural Senate districts.

Sessions

Regular sessions of the Nevada Legislature are held biennially in odd-numbered years. They convene on the first Monday in February after the election of members of the Senate and Assembly. Sessions are limited to 120 calendar days following the approval by voters of a constitutional amendment in 1998. Previous sessions were unlimited in length following the repeal in 1958 of a constitutional provision setting a 60-day maximum limit on the duration of a session. Since 1958, there has been only one regular session of less than 60 days, that being the single annual session of 1960, which lasted 55 days. Between 1975 and 1997, regular sessions in Nevada ran between 113 and 169 days. Conversely, the 1989 Special Session was the shortest in history, lasting just over two hours in the Senate.

At other times, the Governor may, for a specific purpose, call the Legislature into special session, or the Legislature may, upon a petition signed by two-thirds of the

members elected to each house of the Legislature, convene a special session for a specific purpose without action by the Governor.

The Legislature Between Sessions

In addition to their ongoing representational duties, members of the Legislature are also involved in committee work between sessions. Members are assigned to various permanent and interim study committees to investigate a wide range of issues and make recommendations to the next session of the Legislature. These committees hold public hearings, direct research, and deliberate on proposed legislation for the next session of the Legislature.

Staff Support

The **Legislative Counsel Bureau** provides central, nonpartisan staff support for the Nevada Legislature. This agency includes a **Director** and the **Administrative, Audit, Fiscal Analysis, Legal,** and **Research** Divisions.

The Legislative Counsel Bureau is supervised by the Legislative Commission, a body of 12 legislators, 6 from each house. The Commission meets periodically to take action on behalf of the Legislative Branch of government and provides guidance to the staff of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Qualifications of Legislators

To be elected to either house of the Legislature, a person must be at least 21 years of age at the time of the election, a resident of the State for at least one year, and a qualified elector and resident in the district to be represented.

Terms of Office

All 42 members of the Assembly are elected for 2-year terms at the general election held in even-numbered years. Members of the Senate are elected for 4-year terms, with 10 being elected in one General Election and 11 in the next. Effective for the 2010 General Election, a current or former Assembly or Senate member may not seek election to a house in which he or she has served for 12 years or more.

Compensation

Legislators are paid a salary for the first 60 days of a regular session and for up to 20 days of a special session. Under **Nevada Revised Statutes 218A.630**, the minimum daily salary for legislators is \$130. For legislators elected on or after November 8, 2006, the compensation of the office of the Senator or Assembly member is increased by an amount equal to the cumulative percentage increase in the salaries of the classified employees of the State during the immediately preceding term of that office.

Legislators receive a per diem allowance, which is intended to cover the legislator's lodging, meals, and incidental expenses and is equal to the federal rate for the Carson

City area. This per diem amount is paid each day that the Legislature is in session. Legislators are also entitled to allowances for communications, postage, stationery, and travel.

When the Legislature is not in session, each Senator and Assembly member is entitled to receive a salary and the per diem allowance and travel expenses provided by law for each day of attendance at a conference, training session, meeting, seminar, or other gathering at which the legislator officially represents the State of Nevada or its Legislature.