

The 2011 Southern Nevada Legislative Scorecard

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Introduction

For southern Nevadans, the recently completed 76th session of the Nevada Legislature looked a lot like prior sessions. Despite the fact that 43 of the state's 63 legislators, 18 of the Legislature's 20 committee chairs, and the majority leaders of both chambers all hail from the south, the session failed to alter a status quo that works against the region's needs and potential

Indeed, southern Nevadans may wonder why a region that nearly three out of four Nevadans call home and which generates better than four out of five general fund tax dollars are represented by legislators who session after session return home with no better than two-thirds of general fund revenue after having voted to redistribute hundreds of millions of tax dollars generated in Clark County to fund government services in the rest of Nevada.

Unfortunately, the dominance of northern Nevada over southern Nevada is a very old story that stems from a number of factors. Clearly, some of the north's advantages are embed in the Nevada Constitution (for instance, the cap on the mining tax and locating the capitol in Carson City). The malapportionment of legislative seats that persisted into the 1960s diminished the south's voice when many state institutions were established. Also, because legislative service is less demanding for northerners and northerners typically represent safer seats, prior to the implementation of term limits, northern legislators tended to have longer careers, allowing them to accrue greater seniority and clout.

Far and away, however, the cause of southern Nevada's subordination to the interests of northern Nevada is the decisions of some southern legislators to vote against the region's interests. Thus, the purpose of the 2011 Southern Nevada Legislative Scorecard (SNLS) is to illuminate which legislators stand with southern Nevada and which do not.

Measuring Support for Southern Nevada Interests

While much of what the Legislature does is mundane and uncontroversial, in 2011 there were a handful of issues (e.g., mining and gaming, infrastructure, and economic development) where regional interests were at stake and are used to construct the scorecard. Specifically, the 2011 Southern Nevada Legislative Scorecard includes the ten pieces of legislation detailed below. For each of the ten bills, a yes vote was considered a vote for the interests of southern Nevada.

1. **SB493**, which creates the Mining Oversight and Accountability Commission and reduces the industry's tax deductions (mining operations typically deduct between 70% and 80% of revenue from their taxable income and the industry's deductions have not been audited in years).
2. **SJR15**, which begins the process to amend the Nevada Constitution to remove the 5% tax cap on mining profits and alter how mining taxes are distributed (presently, the majority of mining revenue does not go into the state general fund, but rather revert to the county of origin).
3. **AB258**, which gives the Nevada Gaming Commission the power to adopt regulations to implement online gaming in the state if the federal government approves it and positions southern Nevada to be the industry leader.

4. **AB183**, which authorizes school bond reserves to be used for renovation and repairs to aging schools (Governor Sandoval's budget sought to take over \$200 million in voter approved school bond reserves from Clark County and place them into the state general fund).
5. **SB 432**, which continues the funding for the Southern Nevada Water Authority's third intake valve into Lake Mead.
6. **SB506**, which provides authorization for the Boulder City bypass project.
7. **SB360**, which specifies the redevelopment authority for the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community and encourage investment in renewable energy projects.
8. **AB580**, which funds, among other aspects of state government, the Economic Development Commission.
9. **SB504**, which funds, among other projects, capital improvements at the Valley of Fire State Park, the High Desert State Prison, the Southern Desert Correctional Center, and the Grant Sawyer Building and provides for advance planning for a DMV building in Las Vegas and the Lake Mead Fish Hatchery
10. **AB561**, which is supported by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and reduces additional cuts to southern Nevada government services by temporarily extending taxes that were set to expire on July 1.

Also, note that other bills that would have benefitted southern Nevada were killed at some point in the legislative process. For instance, **AB506** and **AB418**, which sought tax credits to attract filmmakers to Nevada (most movie production in Nevada occurs in Las Vegas), were never brought to a vote. The same holds for **SJR9**, which proposed to amend the Nevada Constitution to require the support of two-thirds of legislators in both chambers to either raid the coffers of a local government (i.e., Clark County) or push unfunded mandates on to a local government. But perhaps the most glaring disparity in the ability of northern and southern legislators to deliver for their constituents was exemplified in the waning days of the session. Whereas the southern delegation failed to deliver a tax district for any of the three southern Nevada arena proposals (**SB501**), northern interests gained unanimous approval for a similar arrangement for the Reno minor league baseball team, the Aces (**AB376**).

Who Votes For and Against Southern Nevada?

Table 1 summarizes the legislators who are the most supportive of southern Nevada interests as measured by their SNLS scores (e.g., the percent of votes where the legislator supported the interests of southern Nevada) for the 76th session of the Nevada Legislature. Rankings are presented separately for the Assembly and the Senate. Scores that are at or above 70% are considered to be supportive of southern Nevada interests. The Appendix provides vote break downs for all legislators.

Table 1
Legislators Who Are the Most Supportive of Southern Nevada

Assembly	SNLS Score	Senate	SNLS Score
1. Elliot Anderson (D) Las Vegas	100	1. Shirley Breeden (D) Henderson	100
1. Teresa Benitez-Thompson (D) Reno	100	1. Allison Copening (D) Las Vegas	100
1. David Bobzien (D) Reno	100	1. Mo Denis (D) Las Vegas	100
1. Steven Brooks (D) Las Vegas	100	1. Steven Horsford (D) North Las Vegas	100
1. Olivia Diaz (D) North Las Vegas	100	1. Ruben Kihuen (D) Las Vegas	100
1. Marilyn Dondero Loop (D) Las Vegas	100	1. John Lee (D) North Las Vegas	100
1. Lucy Flores (D) Las Vegas	100	1. Shelia Leslie (D) Reno	100
1. Jason Fierson (D) Las Vegas	100	1. Mark Manendo (D) Las Vegas	100
1. Joe Hogan (D) Las Vegas	100	1. David Parks (D) Las Vegas	100
1. April Mastroluca (D) Henderson	100	1. Mike Schneider (D) Las Vegas	100
1. Harvey Munford (D) Las Vegas	100	1. Valerie Wiener (D) Las Vegas	100
1. John Oceguera (D) Las Vegas	100	2. Ben Kieckhefer (R) Reno	80
1. Tick Segerblom (D) Las Vegas	100	3. Joe Hardy (R) Boulder City	70
1. Debbie Smith (D) Sparks	100	3. Mike McGinness (R) Fallon	70
2. Paul Aizley (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Kelvin Atkinson (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Irene Bustamante Adams (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Maggie Carlton (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Richard Carrillo (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Marcus Conklin (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Richard Daly (D) Sparks	90		
2. William Horne (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Marilyn Kirkpatrick (D) North Las Vegas	90		
2. Dina Neal (D) North Las Vegas	90		
2. James Ohrenschall (D) Las Vegas	90		
2. Peggy Pierce (D) Las Vegas	90		
3. Mark Sherwood (R) Henderson	80		
4. Pete Goicoechea (R) Eureka	70		
4. Tom Grady (R) Yerington	70		
4. Scott Hammond (R) Las Vegas	70		
4. Randy Kirner (R) Reno	70		
4. Kelly Kite (R) Minden	70		
4. Lynn Stewart (R) Henderson	70		
4. Melissa Woodbury (R) Las Vegas	70		

As the data in Table 1 suggest, the good news for southern Nevadans is that 25 legislators – 14 in the Assembly and 11 in the Senate – have perfect SNLS scores. Among these legislators, the majority represent southern seats (11 of 14 in the Assembly and 10 of 11 Senators). The other four legislators in this group represent districts in Washoe County. In addition, 12 Assembly members, 11 of whom represent southern Nevada districts, have SNLS scores of 90. Two legislators – one Senator and one Assembly member – have scores of 80 and nine legislators have scores of 70. In sum, the data summarized in Table 1 indicate that most – but not all – southern Nevadans are served by legislators who are attuned to the region’s needs and represent their interests in Carson City. Moreover, given the centrality of southern Nevada to the state’s economy, it is heartening to observe so many legislators from outside the region regularly voting to support the region’s interests.

Table 2 summarizes the SNLS scores for the legislators who are the least supportive of southern Nevada interests. Not surprisingly, most of the legislators who score low represent districts in northern Nevada. However, some southern legislators frequently vote against their regional interests. For instance, Senators Cegavske and Halseth were the only legislators in either chamber to vote in opposition to **AB258** (internet gaming). These two Senators, along with Senator Roberson also cast votes against **SB432**, which continues funding for the third intake straw into Lake Mead.

Table 2
Legislators Who Are the Least Supportive of Southern Nevada

Assembly	SNLS Score	Senate	SNLS Score
1. Ed Goedhart (R) Amargosa Valley	10	1. Elizabeth Halseth (R) Las Vegas	10
2. John Ellison (R) Elko	20	2. Greg Brower (R) Washoe	20
3. John Hambrick (R) Las Vegas	30	3. Barbara Cegavske (R) Las Vegas	20
3. Pete Livermore (R) Carson City	30	4. Don Gustavson (R) Washoe	20
3. Richard McArthur (R) Las Vegas	30	5. James Settelmeyer (R) Carson City	20
6. Crescent Hardy (R) Mesquite	40	6. Michael Roberson (R) Henderson	30
7. Ira Hansen (R) Sparks	60	7. Dean Rhoads (R) Elko	60
8. Pat Hickey (R) Reno	60		

For southern Nevadans, the information presented in Tables 1 and 2 is informative. At the same time, it may be that partisanship is a confounding factor in explaining variation in legislators’ support for southern Nevada interests. That is, most of the SNLS scores reported in Table 1 (the most supportive) are for Democratic legislators and those legislators whose scores are summarized in Table 2 (the least supportive) are Republicans. However, the information in Table 3 suggests that partisanship is not the culprit.

Specifically, Table 3 summarizes the SNLS scores for all southern Nevada Republican legislators by chamber. This information, along with the data presented in Tables 1 and 2, reveal that while Republicans, in general, may have lower SNLS scores, there is substantial variation among southern Republicans in their support for regional interests. For instance, southern Assembly Republicans Sherwood, Hammond, Stewart, and Woodbury have SNLS scores that are significantly higher than those of their Assembly co-partisans Hambrick, McArthur, and Hardy. In the Senate, the split in the southern delegation is even more glaring. Of the 14 Senators from southern Nevada, ten have perfect SNLS scores (see Table 1) and Republican Senator Hardy (Boulder City) has a score of 70. In contrast, *the combined SNLS scores of Roberson, Cegavske, and Halseth are less than Hardy's*. Geographically, the voting behavior of these three Senators is consistent with a legislator representing a district well north of Indian Springs as opposed to one elected from Clark County.

Table 3
SNLS Scores for Southern Nevada Republican Legislators

Assembly	SNLS Score	Senate	SNLS Score
1. Mark Sherwood	80	1. Joe Hardy	70
2. Scott Hammond	70	2. Michael Roberson	30
2. Lynn Stewart	70	3. Barbara Cegavske	20
2. Melissa Woodbury	70	4. Elizabeth Halseth	10
3. Crescent Hardy	40		
4. John Hambrick	30		
4. Richard McArthur	30		

While the behavior of Halseth and Roberson may stem from their limited familiarity with southern Nevada issues (both are freshman and neither has prior electoral experience), the case of Cegavske is puzzling. She has served in the Nevada Legislature since 1996 and her campaign website (www.barbaracegavske.com) touts her support for enterprise zones and renewable energy corridors – two primary components of the southern Nevada agenda. Yet, in addition to voting against water and gaming, she voted against **SB360**, which specifies the redevelopment authority for the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community and obligates that a portion of the tax revenues received by redevelopment agencies within this community be used for renewable energy projects and economic development.

The information presented in Table 3 also can be used to make direct comparisons in how similarly situated southern legislatures choose to represent the region's interests. Specifically, the Assembly districts of Hammond and Sherwood are contained within the Senate seats of Halseth and Roberson respectively. Moreover, all four are freshman legislators who were elected in close elections in 2010. All four also represent closely divided districts as only

Sherwood's district had a (slight) Republican registration advantage in November. Moreover, the seats presently held by Hammond, Sherwood, and Roberson are the only GOP pick-ups in the Legislature in the cycle. Yet, while these legislators were elected in the same year and represent the same party and geographic spaces, *the SNLS scores for Senators Halseth and Roberson are 60 and 50 points lower than those for their corresponding Assembly co-partisans Hammond and Sherwood*. In short, these comparisons, strongly suggest that support for southern Nevada interests is not a function of partisanship, but rather reflect differences in how these legislators perceive their constituencies and these constituencies' needs.

Nevada at the Crossroad

The purpose of this report is to detail the degree to which legislators elected from southern Nevada support the region's interest. In a future report, the Southern Nevada Regent Scorecard (SNRS) will be unveiled to assess the degree to which the southern members of Nevada's higher education governing body work to benefit the region's institutions of higher education.

To be sure, the vast majority of southern Nevada legislators have SNLS scores for 2011 at or above 70%. Thus, most southern Nevadans are represented by legislators who work to further their interests in Carson City. Unfortunately, as long as some southern Nevada legislators do not, the region will continue to be treated as second-class. For decades northern powerbrokers have split the Legislature's southern delegation with the results being the stifling of the south's potential and the biennial plundering of southern Nevada's assets to pay for government services elsewhere in the state. Yet, if Nevada is to be revitalized as a more economically diverse state that is capable of developing a workforce that will attract business investment, this is only going to occur in southern Nevada.

Clearly, then, while the economic downturn has put Nevada at a crossroad, the continuation of a failed status quo in state government will do nothing to move the state forward. Indeed, it is time for a new day in state government – it is southern Nevada's time.

Appendix
Southern Nevada Legislative Scorecard (SNLS) for the 76th Session of the Nevada Legislature (2011)

Name	Chamber	Party	SB493	SJR15	AB258	AB183	SB432	SB506	SB360	AB580	SB504	AB561	Score
1. Aizley, Paul	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
2. Anderson, Elliot	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
3. Atkinson, Kelvin	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
4. Benitez-Thompson, Teresa	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
5. Bobzien, David	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
6. Breeden, Shirley	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
7. Brooks, Steven	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
8. Brower, Greg	Senate	R			X			X					20
9. Bustamante Adams, Irene	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
10. Carlton, Maggie	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
11. Carrillo, Richard	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
12. Cegavske, Barbara	Senate	R	X					X					20
13. Conklin, Marcus	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
14. Copening, Allison	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
15. Daly, Richard	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
16. Denis, Mo	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
17. Diaz, Olivia	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
18. Dondero Loop, Marilyn	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
19. Ellison, John	Assembly	R			X			X					20
20. Flores, Lucy	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
21. Frierson, Jason	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
22. Goedhart, Ed	Assembly	R			X								10
23. Goicoechea, Pete	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
24. Grady, Tom	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
25. Gustavson, Don	Senate	R			X			X					20
26. Halseth, Elizabeth	Senate	R						X					10
27. Hambrick, John	Assembly	R	X		X		X						30
28. Hammond, Scott	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
29. Hansen, Ira	Assembly	R			X		X	X		X	X	X	60
30. Hardy, Joe	Senate	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
31. Hardy, Crescent	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X					40
32. Hickey, Pat	Assembly	R	X		X			X		X	X	X	60

33. Hogan, Joseph	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
34. Horne, William	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
35. Horsford, Steven	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
36. Kieckhefer, Ben	Senate	R	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	80
37. Kihuen, Ruben	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
38. Kirkpatrick, Marilyn	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	90
39. Kirner, Randy	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
40. Kite, Kelly	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
41. Lee, John	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
42. Leslie, Shelia	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
43. Livermore, Pete	Assembly	R	X		X			X				X	30
44. Manendo, Mark	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
45. Mastroluca, April	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
46. McArthur, Richard	Assembly	R	X		X		X						30
47. McGinness, Mike	Senate	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
48. Munford, Harvey	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
49. Neal, Dina	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
50. Ocegueda, John	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
51. Ohrenschall, James	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
52. Parks, David	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
53. Pierce, Peggy	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	90
54. Rhoads, Dean	Senate	R			X		X	X		X	X	X	60
55. Roberson, Michael	Senate	R		X	X			X					30
56. Schneider, Michael	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
57. Segerblom, Tick	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
58. Settelmeyer, James	Senate	R			X			X					20
59. Sherwood, Mark	Assembly	R	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	80
60. Smith, Debbie	Assembly	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
61. Stewart, Lynn	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70
62. Wiener, Valarie	Senate	D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100
63. Woodbury, Melissa	Assembly	R	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	70

X = legislator voted with the interests of southern Nevada; legislator represents southern Nevada