

A Final Resting Place, Closer to Home

By Rachel Dahl

For generations of veterans in northeastern Nevada, a final resting place in a national cemetery has meant leaving home, but that just changed last Friday when the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs dedicated the Elko National Cemetery Sept. 4.

The ceremony marks the establishment of Nevada's first federally operated national cemetery and brings veterans' burial services to a part of rural Nevada where families have long faced hours of travel to reach one.

The 15.37-acre cemetery at 3602 Jennings Way is expected to begin accepting interments this fall. When it opens, it will become the 158th cemetery operated by the VA's National Cemetery Administration.

More importantly for rural Nevada, it is expected to serve more than 3,700 veterans, along with their spouses and eligible children living within 75 miles of Elko.

Before the Elko cemetery, the closest national cemetery for veterans in the area was Snake River Canyon National Cemetery in Idaho, about 169 miles away.

"This day has been decades in the making," U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto said during the dedication.

The cemetery is being developed through the National Cemetery Administration's Rural Initiative, created to extend VA burial benefits to veterans living in areas without reasonable access to a national or state veterans cemetery.

Nevada already operates two veterans cemeteries through the Nevada Department of Veterans



VA Cemetery in Elko - courtesy Nevada Department of Veterans Services

Services: the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fernley and the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City.

But the Elko cemetery is different, being owned, operated, and maintained by the federal government through the VA, making it Nevada's first national veterans cemetery.

The distinction is especially significant in a state where vast distances often separate rural residents from government services concentrated in metropolitan areas.

"Veterans come first at VA no matter where they live, and this new cemetery creates a much-needed final resting place for Nevadans who served this nation and their families," VA Secretary Doug Collins said.

Gov. Joe Lombardo, U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei, Cortez Masto, and VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Sam Brown participated in the dedication ceremony. Representatives of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone also offered prayers and blessings.

The ceremony included the presentation of colors, military honors, a rifle salute, taps, and the unveiling of a cemetery plaque.

Construction of the cemetery is planned in three phases, with each phase expected to provide approximately 15 years of burial capacity.

The first phase will include 1,045 gravesites and is expected to be completed in the coming months.

The cemetery will accommodate

traditional casketed burials, in-ground burial of cremated remains, and urn placement in columbarium niches. Plans also include memorialization for veterans whose remains are not available for burial, including those whose ashes have been scattered.

Getting the cemetery built has been a years-long effort involving veterans, local advocates, Nevada's congressional delegation, and multiple presidential administrations.

Cortez Masto introduced legislation in 2020 aimed at advancing the Elko cemetery and secured a commitment from the VA during the first Trump administration to move forward with the site. She continued pressing the agency over the following years for construction timelines and completion of the project.

U.S. Sen. Jacky Rosen also worked to secure funding for the cemetery, including \$553,000 in a 2023 federal funding package for continued work on the project.

"The completion of the Elko National Veterans Cemetery represents our strong commitment to rural veterans and their families, who will no longer have to travel hours for a national burial," Rosen said following the dedication.

For Elko-area veterans, that distance has been at the heart of the issue.

Cortez Masto said during the ceremony that traveling to the nearest national cemetery in Idaho could mean a two-and-a-half-hour drive each way for a family wanting to visit the grave of a veteran.

She credited local veterans, including members of veterans service organizations, with pushing for the project when efforts to establish the cemetery stalled.

The result is a facility designed not simply for Elko, but for veterans scattered across a wide section of northeastern Nevada.

Once the first phase is complete, interments are anticipated to begin later this fall.

Although located in Nevada, management and oversight of the Elko cemetery will initially be provided by Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, California.

Veterans do not have to wait until the time of death for their families to determine eligibility for burial. The VA allows veterans and eligible family members to apply in advance for a determination of eligibility for burial in a national cemetery.

Eligible veterans may receive a gravesite, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, burial flag, and Presidential Memorial Certificate as part of VA burial benefits.



A strong attendance at the VA Cemetery Dedication Sept 4 - Photo courtesy Governor Lombardo

Families and funeral directors seeking information about burial at Elko National Cemetery may contact the National Cemetery Administration at 800-535-1117.

For northeastern Nevada, however, the significance of the new cemetery goes beyond another federal facility.

It puts a national veterans cemetery within the landscape where those veterans lived, worked, raised their families, and served their communities.

"Elko National Cemetery will give generations of Nevadans a space to honor and remember the friends, neighbors and relatives who stood up and sacrificed for the country we love," Collins said.



VA Cemetery ceremony, Photo courtesy Governor Lombardo

Nevada Department of Education Announcements and Updates

By Sydney Trainor

The Nevada Department of Education recently announced several updates affecting schools and educators across the state, including the return of classroom grant funding and new flexibility in education requirements, as well as the announcement of the history teacher of the year.

DonorsChoose Grant Program Returns

On Sept. 1, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) announced the return of the DonorsChoose grant program with \$7.5 million available in funding for the 2026-27 school year. In total, \$15 million was allocated from 2025-27, including \$7.5 million for each fiscal year.

DonorsChoose is a grant program designed to provide Nevada's public school teachers with funding for school projects. Educators may receive up to \$500 for classroom projects, with requests funded on a first-come, first-served basis. The grant opened on Sept. 1.

According to NDE, funding is made possible by Senate Bill 90, which was sponsored by Sen. Marilyn Dondero Loop and passed by the Nevada Legislature in 2025.

"Supporting our educators is one

of the best investments Nevada can make," said Sen. Marilyn Dondero Loop. "I was proud to introduce SB 90, which offers teachers grants of up to \$500 for classroom projects that enhance the learning environment of students across the state. I thank DonorsChoose and the Nevada Department of Education for their efforts and wish all educators a successful school year."

The DonorsChoose funding is available for full-time preschool through 12th grade Nevada public school educators who spend at least half of their time directly engaging with students. Eligible projects are expected to be funded within roughly one week of submission.

"The DonorsChoose grant program allows us to support hardworking educators across Nevada by providing support for classroom needs and innovative projects," said Victor Wakefield, superintendent of public instruction. "I am grateful to Senator Dondero Loop, the Nevada Legislature, and Governor Lombardo for their continued support of this program."

Ed-Flex Approved for Nevada

On Aug. 21, the U.S. Department of Education announced the approval of Ed-Flex for Nevada, as well as Arizona and South Carolina. Now 25 states in total have access to this flexibility. According to the

department, this is another step in the Trump administration's goal to "return education to the states."

"Reaching 25 Ed-Flex states is a watershed moment that proves the paradigm is shifting in American education," said Kirsten Baesler, assistant secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Innovation does not flow from top-down mandates, but rather it thrives when state and local leaders are given the regulatory freedom to adapt and respond directly to their students."

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Ed-Flex is a program that "allows states to waive certain federal requirements that could hinder local efforts to improve education." This allows state education agencies to waive certain federal requirements for school districts and schools without first seeking approval from the U.S. Department of Education, giving local schools more flexibility in how they use certain federal funds.

"The U.S. Department of Education's approval of Ed-Flex for Nevada is an important step toward providing more flexibility for our districts and schools in the use of federal Title funding," said Victor Wakefield. "Nevada's participation in Ed-Flex is the direct result of valuable feedback provided earlier this year

during my statewide listening tour and complements broader efforts led by Governor Joe Lombardo and the Nevada Legislature to modernize and streamline processes. Our shared goal is to focus time and resources on what matters most: high-quality teaching and learning."

Nye County and Washoe County school districts both requested that NDE apply for Ed-Flex. "Ed-Flex approval is a huge win for Nevada schools," said Joseph Gent, superintendent of the Nye County School District. "It gives us the flexibility to direct federal funds straight to our local priorities and support our students more effectively."

History Teacher of the Year

On Sept. 3, Sophia Blair was announced as Nevada's 2026 Gilder Lehrman History Teacher of the Year. Blair is a teacher at Doral Academy of Northern Nevada, a public charter school in Reno.

"We are proud to recognize Blair as Nevada's recipient of this prestigious award," said Victor Wakefield.

The Gilder Lehrman History Teacher of the Year program honors K-12 teachers for their work bringing American history to life in the classroom.

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COMMENTARY

This Election Matters More Than You Think

By Randi Thompson

Labor Day is kickoff season for those of us in politics. You will start seeing more ads, getting postcards, and seeing yard signs pop up across the state.

Presidential elections get most of the attention. They dominate the news, fill our social media feeds, and generate the kind of excitement that brings more voters to the polls.

Midterm elections rarely receive the same attention. But in many ways, the decisions made in a midterm election can have a more direct effect on our daily lives.

That is certainly true in Nevada this year.

Nevadans will elect a governor and every other statewide constitutional officer. All four of our congressional seats are on the ballot, along with all 42 seats in the Nevada Assembly and 11 of the 21 seats in the Nevada Senate.

Across Nevada, voters will also choose the next mayors and county commissioners.

These are not minor offices, and this is not a minor election.

The people we elect will help determine how much we pay in taxes, how aggressively government regulates our businesses, and how responsibly it spends our money.

They will influence our energy and water policies, the affordability of housing, the safety of our neighborhoods, and the quality of our schools.

They will decide whether Nevada remains a state where families and businesses can build a future, or becomes a more expensive, more heavily regulated place in which government continues to grow faster than the people's ability to pay for it.

Politics is often portrayed as a distant contest taking place in Washington, D.C. But most politics are

local.

It is the police officer responding to a call in your neighborhood. It is the condition of the road you drive to work or the amount of traffic you encounter. It is the cost of opening or expanding a small business. It is whether new development pays its fair share for the infrastructure it requires. It is whether government protects our limited water resources and provides reliable, affordable energy.

Politics also shapes the values reflected in our laws.

Many Nevadans are concerned about protecting opportunities and fair competition for girls in school athletics. Many believe our elections should be secure, transparent, and limited to eligible American citizens. Others are worried about crime, rising taxes, burdensome regulations, and government policies that make groceries, housing, insurance, and utility bills even less affordable.

If these issues matter to you, then voting must matter to you as well.

As a Republican, I believe in limited government, personal responsibility, public safety, strong families, and an economy in which hard work is rewarded. I believe criminals should be locked up, not toothpaste. I believe taxpayers deserve accountability and small businesses deserve the freedom to succeed without being buried under unnecessary regulations.

But I also believe elected officials have an obligation to represent everyone, not merely the members of their own party or the loudest voices in their political base.

Nevada does not need more ideological warfare. We need principled leaders who can listen, exercise good judgment, and work with people who may not agree with them on every issue. Compromise should never mean abandoning our values, but governing does require

finding practical solutions that improve people's lives.

That is the kind of conservatism I believe most Nevadans understand: fiscally responsible, locally focused, and grounded in common sense.

This election will determine who holds the governor's office, who manages important statewide agencies, who represents Nevada in Congress, and which party controls our Legislature. It will determine the direction of cities and counties and shape decisions affecting our communities for years to come.

Yet many people who would never miss a presidential election may sit this one out.

We cannot afford to let that happen.

When turnout is lower, a relatively small number of voters can determine the outcome of enormously important races. Close elections can be decided by hundreds of votes, or sometimes even fewer. Your vote is not merely symbolic. In a midterm election, it can be especially powerful.

So, learn about the candidates. Look beyond party labels and campaign slogans. Ask whether they understand the communities they hope to represent. Examine their records, priorities, and the people supporting them.

Most importantly, vote.

Nevada's future is not determined only in Washington. It will be determined in Carson City, in our city halls, on our county commissions, and at thousands of kitchen tables where Nevadans decide whether participating is worth the effort.

It is.

This year, the presidency may not be on the ballot, but Nevada's future certainly is.

Randi Thompson is a native of Reno and a Republican political consultant.

Aces 9/11 Military Appreciation Night



Photo Courtesy Reno Aces

Staff Report

The Reno Aces will have a special 9/11 and Military Appreciation Night at Greater Nevada Field beginning at 6:30 p.m. The Aces host the Albuquerque Isotopes in a Sept. 11 night game that begins following a salute to the military.

Military Appreciation Night at Greater Nevada Field not only pays tribute to the armed forces, but also reflects on prisoners of war and individuals missing in action. The Vietnam Veterans of America, Sierra Nevada Chapter 989 in Reno, and the Aces dedicated the POW/MIA (Prisoner of War-Missing in Action) chair in 2019, which has a view of the field from the visitor side of the field at section 118.



File Photo

Local 9/11 Remembrances

Staff Report

Join the City of Sparks, the Association of the U.S. Army, VFW Silver State Post 3396, and other community partners to commemorate Patriot Day at the Nevada Veterans Memorial Plaza at Sparks Marina at 9 a.m. on Sept. 11.

Fallon's 9/11 ceremony begins at 10 a.m. at the City Hall courtyard. The guest speaker is Maj. Gen. D. Rodger Waters, the Nevada National Guard's adjutant general.

The University of Nevada, Reno, will hold a ceremony at 8:46 a.m. on Sept. 11 at South Quad, Morrill Hall. Approximately 2,977 American flags, each representing a life lost in the Sept. 11 attacks, will honor the lives lost. A tribute also honors the service members from Nevada who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Honor Flight Nevada and Reno-Tahoe International Airport will hold a memorial ceremony at the Ski Statue in the airport lobby at 6 a.m. on Sept. 11.

The Diocese of Reno and the Tahoe Philharmonic will present a Requiem Concert at St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral at 7 p.m. on Sept. 12.

Carson City will hold a ceremony at noon at Mills Park on Sept. 11.

The Carson City Christian Ministerial Fellowship will gather in Mills Park at the 9/11 Memorial site, located near the entrance of the Marv Teixeira Pavilion and the Carson & Mills Park Railroad. The event will begin on Sept. 11 at 6 p.m. in remembrance of what took place 25 years ago.

Nevada Rebuilds Election System as Debate Over Trust Continues

Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar says new equipment, faster ballot processing and changes to mail voting have reshaped Nevada elections

By Rachel Dahl

Nevada's long-running argument over election integrity has largely been fought in political terms, but Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar would rather talk about flash drives and the little details that build public trust in a process integral to our very system.

During a two-part Nevada Newsmakers discussion on election security, Aguilar laid out changes made to Nevada's election system since 2022, including new statewide voter-registration technology, new voting equipment in all 17 counties and changes in how mail ballots are processed.

Aguilar said Nevada now ranks second in the nation for election administration in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Election Performance Index, up from 13th following the 2020 election.

The independent index measures registration, voting, wait times, ballot processing and data transparency.

"We have secure and safe elections," Aguilar told host Sam Shad, "not just from a cybersecurity [perspective], but also to know that the actual voter who is registered with the state of Nevada is the one casting the ballot and that those ballots are being counted in a fair and accurate way."

Aguilar appeared with former Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, now president of the University of Nevada, Reno, and former Assembly Speaker Richard Perkins. Sandoval and Perkins

are involved with the Democracy Defense Foundation, a bipartisan effort focused on public confidence in elections.

One of the biggest changes Aguilar described is inside the voting booth.

Nevada has moved statewide to ballot-marking devices. Voters make their selections electronically, but the machine produces a paper ballot they can review before placing it into a separate tabulator.

The change also reduced the number of removable flash drives election workers must secure.

Under the former system, Aguilar said, a polling site with 50 voting machines could have 50 flash drives requiring chain-of-custody procedures. Under the new system, only the tabulators require them.

"So now you go from 50 to three or four," Aguilar said.

The equipment was tested in three smaller counties during the 2024 election before being expanded statewide.

Nevada also implemented a statewide voter-registration and election-management system that Aguilar said helps officials identify potential problems across counties more quickly.

His office investigated approximately 84 election-related cases from the 2024 election, Aguilar said, with roughly eight referred to the Nevada Attorney General's Office.

The discussion became particularly

relevant to rural Nevada when it turned to mail ballots.

About 60% of ballots cast in Nevada's June primary were cast by mail, and the four counties with the highest percentages of mail voting were rural.

Aguilar said mail voting is especially popular in rural counties, where polling places can be much farther away. That makes mail ballots less a partisan issue than a practical one for many rural voters.

Since 2022, he said, 86% of Nevada registered voters have used a mail ballot at least once.

The other persistent complaint surrounding Nevada elections is speed.

Shad pressed Aguilar on why Nevada could not set deadlines that would allow results to be known by midnight on Election Day or early the following morning.

Aguilar said Nevada counties had approximately 98% of all ballots in their possession on election night in 2024. Fewer than 2% of mail ballots arrived afterward, and about 95% of those arrived within 24 hours.

The larger problem, he said, is the number of ballots delivered to polling locations and drop boxes on Election Day.

Nevada law allows counties to begin processing mail ballots before Election Day. Aguilar said counties can be caught up going into Election Day and then receive another large batch.

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EVENTS

Autumn Takes the Scenic Route as it Arrives in Nevada

Attend an event!

By Doris Rodriguez

Hey Folks!

As autumn arrives, rural Nevada comes alive with vibrant country celebrations. The crisp air and colorful foliage create the perfect backdrop for a weekend getaway. Rich with old country charm and warmhearted hospitality, Nevada offers an authentic rural experience.

If you're ready to stir up energy and a little autumn wonder, this weekend is built for a road trip!



Photo Courtesy Travel Nevada

Start in Virginia City, where the 67th International Camel & Ostrich Races come thundering back to the Virginia City Fairgrounds and Arena! I mean, where else in Nevada can you witness camels, ostriches, zebras, and emus dash for glory across four wild and unforgettable shows? The festivities kick off with Hot Camel Nights at 5 p.m. Sept. 11, with gates opening at 3 p.m.

Saturday's schedule is packed: catch the 10 a.m. show (gates at 8 a.m.), a 2 p.m. extravaganza (gates at 12:30 p.m.), and the always-entertaining Camel Hump to C Street parade, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, is Family Day. Enjoy the noon show: gates open

at 10 a.m., and if you arrive early, the first 100 kids can saddle up for a free camel ride!



Photo Courtesy Douglas County Rodeo

If you're still looking for some fun, the Douglas County Rodeo rides into Gardnerville Sept. 11-12 at the Douglas County Fairgrounds. See the courage of the bull riders, the speed enthusiasts in barrel racing, the swift team ropers, and the most anticipated mini event there is: mutton bustin'!

This year's theme, "A Tribute to Our Heroes," brings an extra layer of meaning. When the dust settles, stick around for live concerts. Redferrin headlines Friday, and Casey Donahew takes the stage Saturday. The music kicks off at 5 p.m. Friday and runs through Saturday night.



Photo Courtesy Sacred Visions Powwow

Just off Interstate 80, the 15th annual Sacred Visions Competition Powwow invites you to dive into the

vibrant heart of Native culture at Big Bend Ranch in Wadsworth from Sept. 11 to 13. Best of all, entry is on the house, so everyone can join the celebration of song, dance, and spirit.

Get ready to camp under the stars for free, browse one-of-a-kind Native arts and crafts, challenge yourself with traditional games, and get in on the lively raffle fun. Whether you're a seasoned powwow veteran or just taking your first steps, you'll find warmth, welcome, and plenty of good times all weekend long.



Photo courtesy Arnold Ligtfoot.

Sunday kicks off a wild week of fast-paced science fun in Battle Mountain. The World Human Powered Speed Challenge starts Sept. 13 on State Route 305, just south of town, and runs through Sept. 19. No engines, no gas, just riders inside sleek, enclosed bikes, pedaling their hearts out along a straight, flat highway in a race to shatter human-powered land-speed records. Admission is free.

Ely's got a wild weekend ahead! On Sept. 11, the White Pine Rodeo kicks off at the White Pine County Fairgrounds, while the same day features the White Pine Countywide Super Sale, because who doesn't love a little hometown hustle?

Saturday, Sept. 12, it's all about horsepower and speed with the 10th annual Race the Rails event at the Nevada Northern Railway, 1100 Avenue A, from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. The train leaves right at 8 a.m., but brave racers start their challenge at 9 a.m., trying to outrun that old steam engine back to the depot.

That evening, Great Basin College celebrates 30 years of community, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at 2115 Bobcat Drive. With horses, trains, sales, and a good old-fashioned hometown get-together, Ely's packing in the fun!

If you're up before the roosters and willing to chase a bigger sky, the 45th annual Great Reno Balloon Race fills Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Sept. 10 through 13. Admission is free and gates open at 3:30 a.m. The Super Glow Show lights the field at 5 a.m., followed by Dawn Patrol taking off at 5:30 a.m. The mass ascension of about 100 balloons launches at 7 a.m. Bring a chair, a jacket, and some coffee. This one rewards the early bird.



Photo Courtesy Reno Balloon

As with any great journey, schedules can shift, so double-check those tickets and start times before you hit the road.

Battle of the Badges Brings New Rivalry to Top Gun Dragstrip in Fallon

By Leanna Lehman

Gentlemen, START YOUR ENGINES!

A dangerous high-speed chase is generally something law enforcement would rather avoid. But going really, really fast? Apparently, that's another matter. Give two officers a sanctioned dragstrip and a little friendly rivalry, and the question becomes: Who's faster?

During the last race of the season, on Sept. 26, Churchill County Sheriff's Deputy Brian Miller and Fallon Police Sgt. Dewayne Edwards Jr. will represent their respective agencies at the region's only National Hot Rod Association-sanctioned drag strip, racing for bragging rights and a traveling trophy that, as of last week, organizers were still figuring out.

The drivers, however, are geared up and getting ready to rumble.

Motor Sports Safety Treasurer Ed Keefe, one of four members of the nonprofit governing board that operates Top Gun Dragstrip in Fallon, said he learned just how seriously the competition was being taken during a recent Chamber of Commerce luncheon. When the question of who would drive came up at the Fallon Police Department, Keefe was told there had initially been plenty of interest.

Battle of the Badges grew out of having local law enforcement officers doing community outreach during races. "They go out in the crowds, and the families, the vendors, and the drivers love to talk to them," Keefe said. "Some of the officers bring their families with them."

The agencies already compete through Battle of the Badges blood drives and holiday donation drives. Why not a race too? "We're like ... you guys each bring out your fastest vehicle, and you identify your most eager officer, and come out and we'll race for a trophy," Keefe said.

"The chief said we need to win this. Who's our driver?" Keefe recalled. "They all backed away and they all pointed to one guy," and Battle of the Badges is now officially on the schedule.

The race comes during a year of

transition at Top Gun. Three members joined the Motor Sports Safety board at the beginning of the year, while one remained. Longtime board members who retired continue to assist as consultants. The current board includes President Phil Sabatino, Vice President Mark Gonzales, Secretary Walt Stacy, and Keefe.

The dragstrip traces its roots back about 30 years, when young people racing on rural roads had become a safety concern. Keefe said local drivers and community leaders sought a safer place to race. Some drivers worked at Naval Air Station Fallon and approached the Navy, which allowed racing on a runway for several years.

As NAS Fallon's mission expanded and the TOPGUN fighter pilot training program moved to Fallon, the City of Fallon and Churchill County worked with the Bureau of Land Management to secure the property south of Fallon where Top Gun Dragstrip operates today.

Thirty years also means aging infrastructure, and Keefe said racers had become concerned the track might close. "We believe that we've

shown enough improvement that the drivers are not concerned about that now," Keefe said. "But now they're demanding what they want."

Work this year has included pavement improvements, electrical work, LED lighting, and technology and safety upgrades. Food and other vendors have also been added to race weekends.

Much of the work at Top Gun has long depended on people and organizations beyond its four-member board. Keefe said some supporters have helped for decades.

A&K Earth Movers has assisted with the track, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District cleared weeds before the season, mosquito control crews visit regularly, and local businesses provide services and materials. Banner Churchill Community Hospital has provided emergency medical coverage on race days for decades, while racers and volunteers handle much of the work required to put on an event.

"We've had extremely good community support," Keefe said.

When the track is "hot," meaning

conditions have been determined safe for racing, required emergency personnel must be in place, including emergency medical services and a fire crew.

"We want to show these drivers we're looking out for them," Keefe said. "And we're going to run the place safe, or we're not going to run it."

The board also hopes to revive Top Gun's \$5 Fridays, when young drivers could bring their cars to the track for an inexpensive night of racing rather than testing them on public roads.

"That was the spirit and intent that the county commissioners and the mayor had when we started, was to get the kids off the street," Keefe said.

Battle of the Badges will take place during Top Gun's final race weekend of the season. Miller and Edwards' vehicles must first undergo the required NHRA safety inspection and Test 'n' Tune before the Sept. 26 showdown.

Then it comes down to two officers, two cars, one traveling trophy, and the sort of bragging rights likely to last considerably longer than a quarter-mile.



Top Gun Dragstrip south of Fallon. Photo courtesy of Top Gun.

LEGISLATIVE

PROSPECT Program Targets Mining Workforce

By Sydney Trainor

On Aug. 7, the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation (CMEI) announced a Notice of Intent for the PROSPECT program. Through PROSPECT (Providing Opportunities for Specialized Education in Critical Technologies), up to \$100 million could be made available to support America’s critical minerals workforce.

“A strong domestic mining and minerals workforce is essential to powering America’s future, strengthening our national security, and ending our dependence on foreign adversaries for the materials that underpin modern energy, manufacturing, and defense,” said U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright. “Through the PROSPECT initiative,

the Department is investing in the next generation of American engineers, scientists, and skilled workers who will help unleash American energy and ensure the United States remains the world’s leading energy powerhouse.”

PROSPECT will increase education and training opportunities to help prepare workers for jobs in the U.S. critical minerals industry. According to DOE, PROSPECT aims to double the number of graduates with degrees related to mining, minerals, and associated supply chain technologies within two years.

“Our brightest students are looking for a challenge—and a calling,” said Assistant Secretary of Energy Audrey Robertson. “PROSPECT invites them to work at the intersection of cutting-edge science and their country’s highest strategic priorities. This unprecedented investment in the

critical minerals workforce will funnel homegrown talent into fulfilling, high-demand careers at the forefront of America’s industrial renaissance.”

The PROSPECT program could have a significant impact in Nevada, particularly at the University of Nevada, Reno’s Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering. Mackay is one of a small number of schools in the country offering mining engineering programs and has long trained students for careers in Nevada’s mining industry.

University President Brian Sandoval has also pointed to the shortage of mining graduates nationwide and the growing need for engineers and other skilled workers. PROSPECT is aimed directly at that shortage, with funding intended to help universities attract more students, provide financial assistance, and strengthen programs

related to mining and critical minerals. While funding recipients have not yet been announced, the university’s existing mining programs closely match the areas PROSPECT is designed to support.



Photo Courtesy U.S. Department of Energy Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation

Public Land, Local Benefit

Natural resources director tells lawmakers public land development can strain rural communities long before the benefits arrive

By Rachel Dahl

Large projects proposed on Nevada’s public lands can bring jobs, investment and new infrastructure to rural communities, but those benefits are not automatic.

That was the message Nye County Natural Resources Director Megan Labadie brought to the Nevada Legislature’s Committee on Public Lands during the Aug. 21 meeting on the Moapa River Indian Reservation.

Mining, solar, transmission lines, battery storage and proposed data-center infrastructure are already part of Nye County’s land-use reality, Labadie told lawmakers. While those projects can create significant economic opportunities, surrounding communities often begin carrying the costs well before the long-term benefits appear.

“Large projects create traffic, housing demand, water and wastewater needs, road maintenance impacts, emergency service impacts and workforce pressure,” Labadie said.

Her answer is to make local benefits part of the development process from the beginning.

Labadie said development agreements, local hiring and contracting requirements, road-maintenance contributions, emergency-service support and infrastructure commitments can help turn project activity into lasting value for the communities where development occurs.

She went further, telling the committee community-benefit agreements should become an enforceable standard for industrial developers.

The argument reflects a larger issue facing Nevada’s rural counties, where the federal government controls most of the land but county governments remain responsible for many services required when development occurs.

Nearly 97% of Nye County’s approximately 11.6 million acres are federally managed or controlled.

That means federal decisions can affect where communities grow, where infrastructure can be built and how local governments plan for housing, roads, water and economic development.

“Land should be treated as community infrastructure, not as an afterthought after project-level review is already underway,” Labadie said.

The difficulty, she said, is that federal land planning has not kept pace with changing conditions in Nye County.

The county is divided among four Bureau of Land Management districts and governed by at least five federal resource-management plans, some 30 to 40 years old.

Nye County spent nearly a decade participating in an update to the 1998 Las Vegas Resource Management Plan before that process was suspended. The county then pursued smaller plan amendments for individual parcels, only to see those efforts delayed when a statewide planning process was proposed.

The result, Labadie said, is that the county is often forced to respond to one project, parcel or right-of-way application at a time rather than plan comprehensively for future growth.

Labadie said about 4 million acres — roughly 35% of Nye County — are now affected by federal withdrawals or conservation restrictions that remove them from multiple-use management or future land uses.

She also told lawmakers the county believes the financial consequences go well beyond the federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes program.

Nye County estimates federal withdrawals reduce county economic activity by roughly \$155 million to \$173 million annually. Labadie said that translates to about \$2 million a

year in lost property-tax revenue, not including potential mineral-related revenue.

Water remains another limiting factor. Labadie said water availability and quality affect nearly every major land-use decision in Nye County, but conditions vary widely from one community to another.

Pahrump faces different pressures than Tonopah. Amargosa Valley depends heavily on agriculture and groundwater. Northern Nye County communities rely more heavily on mining, grazing and access to working lands.

Those differences, she said, are why broad federal planning cannot treat rural communities as interchangeable.

The same applies to tribal governments. Labadie emphasized that consultation with tribes must occur separately and early rather than being folded into general public outreach.

“A development or community-benefit agreement may help local towns but does not replace tribal consultation or separate tribal benefit discussion where a sovereign tribal nation identifies its own interests,” she said.

The issue surfaced throughout the meeting, with members of the Moapa Band of Paiutes raising concerns about water rights, housing, access to additional land and the effects of solar development on cultural resources.

Labadie said Nye County is not arguing against development on federal land. Instead, the county wants communities involved early enough that problems can be addressed while projects are still being designed.

“If permitting reform is intended to make federal review more efficient, county public-purpose projects should benefit from that too,” she said. “Streamlining should not only move large projects faster while local infrastructure, public safety, recreation and land-tenure needs

remain stuck.”

The committee later approved recommendations that included seeking greater transparency from federal land-management agencies during land sales and permitting decisions.

Continued from page B-1- D.O.E.

The award highlights educators who use engaging lessons, original historical materials, and research-based learning to help students better understand the past.

“Ms. Blair is an incredibly dedicated educator who understands that teaching history and civics are fundamental to the development of future citizens and to our democracy,” said Angela Orr, principal at Doral Academy of Northern Nevada. “She engages her students in historical analysis, collaboration, problem solving, and in-depth discussions to bring the past to life and to ensure that students are equipped with the skills they need for the future. She is a stellar teacher, and we are lucky to see her positive impact every day at Doral Academy!”

Blair received praise for challenging her students to examine evidence, construct arguments, and consider multiple perspectives to understand why history matters today.

“Sophia demonstrates the kind of history instruction we want students to experience — students actively examining evidence, asking questions, engaging with different perspectives, and building their own understanding of the past,” said Amanda Jo Hughes, education programs professional for social studies at the Nevada Department of Education. “Her commitment to both her students and the broader social studies community makes her an outstanding representative of history education in Nevada.”

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Continued from Page B-2- Election System

Counties have begun making multiple ballot pickups throughout Election Day rather than allowing ballots to sit at polling locations until the polls close.

Clark County, Aguilar said, processed every mail ballot from the recent primary within 24 hours after Election Day, but he acknowledged Nevada still needs to get faster.

"I think Nevadans demand this," Aguilar said. "I want to figure out how we can do this, and I believe we can."

A separate fight over mail voting is now playing out between states and the federal government.

The U.S. Postal Service adopted new requirements governing election mail, including ballot-envelope standards, barcodes and voter-information reporting. Nevada joined other states challenging the rules, arguing that imposing them just before the November election would interfere with state election administration.

On Sept. 4, a federal judge extended an injunction blocking the requirements for now. The Trump

administration has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to allow the Postal Service rules to take effect.

Sandoval, a former federal judge, emphasized the larger question behind that dispute.

"Elections are the province of the states," he said.

For now, Aguilar's focus is much more basic: paper ballots voters can see, fewer devices to secure, faster processing and a system that can show people what happens to their vote.

Public trust in elections is not built by telling voters to trust the system, but by making the system secure enough that they can see why they should.

Watch the full video by scanning the QR code below: