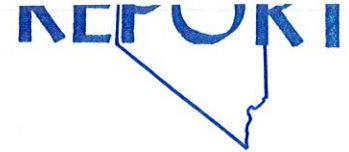


NEVADA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Bureau of Governmental Research, University of Nevada, Reno 89507

V-F



March, 1976

Volume XIV, No. 4

LAS VEGAS-CLARK COUNTY CONSOLIDATION:
A UNIQUE EVENT IN SEARCH OF A THEORY

by

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I Introduction

The 1975 Nevada legislature passed S.B. 601 which provides, in practical terms, for the consolidation of Las Vegas and Clark County. Legally, both governmental entities will continue to exist after January 1977, but they will be governed by essentially the same governing board and most of their departments will be joint. The passage of S.B. 601 was a momentous and singular political accomplishment. Longtime observers of the Nevada legislature commented on the magnitude of S.B. 601; Bryn Armstrong of the Las Vegas Sun referred to it as perhaps the most far-reaching and important bill in 25 years,¹ and political commentator Guy Shippler referred to it as the most complex bill passed in 1975.² S.B. 601 also represents only the second post-World War II consolidation in this country accomplished by a legislature without a vote of the people involved, the other being the merger of Indianapolis and Marion County in 1969.

Questions about an event of such national significance that come immediately to mind for any student of government are how such legislation was developed and why it passed. For the professional political scientist, such an event cries out for a theoretical explanation. It is the intent of this writer to explore possible explanations in the context of theoretical political science.

II The Background of Consolidation

Las Vegas Valley is an area of some 700 square miles bounded on the west by the Spring Mountains, on the east and southeast by the Sunrise Mountains and the McCullogh Range and on the north by the Nellis Air Force Base Gunnery Range and several mountain ranges. The valley is a single social, economic and demographic

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¹Bryn Armstrong, Las Vegas Sun, June 7, 1975, p. 1.

²Guy Shippler telephone conversation, January 8, 1976, Carson City, Nevada.



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entity. Politically, it has been carved into three incorporated cities, four incorporated towns and several special districts. The estimated 1975 population of the valley is around 320,000 with another 20,000 in the remainder of Clark County.

Like many rapidly growing urban areas across the country, the Las Vegas Valley has been hampered in its responses to growth by multiple and competing political entities. Of necessity, Clark County has been providing municipal services on a large scale for at least 15 years. It has provided these services directly and through its unincorporated towns, which in other states would probably be considered county subordinate service districts. Water and sewer services are provided by special districts as well as by the City of North Las Vegas. There is county planning, city planning and regional planning, as well as the de facto planning done by the laying of waterlines and sewer mains.

Examples of overlap, duplication and seeming inefficiencies could go on at length. In 1968, a consulting firm, Public Administration Services, studied the problems of urbanization in the valley. Another study was conducted in 1969 by the Clark County Commission under the direction of three district court judges. A third was done in 1971-72 by a Local Government Study Committee that included legislators and local government officials. Finally, the 1973 legislature created for Clark County the Urban Action Committee which was composed entirely of nonelected people.

The general thrust of these studies, each done from a different perspective, was that the most efficient and rational approach to the growth of the valley was to bring all, or at least most, of the valley under a single government. All reports cited savings that would result from eliminating numerous overlapping or duplicative services, the benefits of coordinated planning for future growth and the increased ability of the citizen to fix governmental responsibility for his problems.

The 1975 session began with consideration of the Urban Action Committee (UAC) report. The UAC was chaired by Professor Albert Johns of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and included 10 other citizens representing all political subdivisions in Clark County. Based upon its legal advice, the UAC decided that the only way to bring together much of the population of the valley governmentally was to legislate a massive annexation to the City of Las Vegas. The UAC felt that the four years required for a constitutional amendment to allow outright city-county consolidation was excessive in view of the problems. Also, it was felt that there was no certainty of success for such an amendment.

The City of Las Vegas heartily supported the annexation proposal. The Chamber of Commerce also supported it primarily on the "half a loaf is better than none" philosophy. The members of the Special Committee on Clark County Urban Matters, a select committee of the 1975 legislature, appointed by the Clark County delegation and chaired by Senator James I. Gibson, were less than enthusiastic about the simple annexation. The delegation as a whole had also refused to endorse the proposal. Clearly, the support for simple annexation was limited.

The general mood that characterized the Special Committee meetings was that 1975 was the year to do something about government in the Las Vegas Valley, but if not annexation, what? It became very clear in early public hearings by the Special Committee that the areas to be annexed, especially Paradise and Winchester, were definitely opposed. This is a generalization based upon the reactions of both legislators in these areas and members of town boards. The Special Committee perceived simple annexation as politically unfeasible, if not impossible, and, further, there was real concern that just annexation would leave many problems unresolved. The result was an attempt, over a four-week period of almost daily meetings, to devise an alternative approach. The Select Committee, at regular intervals, reported to the full Clark

County delegation and all committee minutes were sent to all delegation members within a day of each meeting.

Consideration centered on ways to mandate functional consolidations of services between the city and county to accompany any annexation. One proposal would have disincorporated Las Vegas and made it a huge unincorporated town governed by the county commission. This "Wiesner Plan," named after County Commissioner Tom Wiesner who proposed it, was a novel and fresh approach even if a bit drastic. While the Wiesner Plan would have had practical and political problems if enacted, it did serve a useful purpose in the development of S.B. 601. Viewed in terms of the Hegelian dialectic, the thesis was the UAC annexation proposal, a traditional and common solution. The Wiesner Plan was the antithesis, a bold and imaginative departure from the usual. The synthesis was imaginative yet it preserved traditional governmental entities while bringing about a practical consolidation.

It is not the purpose of this paper to elaborate on the content of S.B. 601, a bill of 172 sections and 64 printed pages. Essentially, effective January 1977, the bill creates an 11-member county commission with eight of the 11 also serving as the city commission of Las Vegas. A mayor of the city will be elected separately and preside over the eight-member commission. There will be a county-city manager who will be chief administrator for both entities. Most departments of the city and county will be merged into single departments. The boundaries of Las Vegas will be expanded to include the unincorporated towns of Winchester, most of Paradise, East Las Vegas, Sunrise Manor and some unincorporated areas of Clark County. The point of this brief explanation is to show that S.B. 601, within the context of American local government, brought about revolutionary change. Since 1945, only 13 city-county consolidations have taken place in the United States.

III Consolidations and Political Theory

Political change in America has traditionally been incremental and seldom rapid or revolutionary. The low acceptance of consolidation in spite of the fact that it has been touted as a solution to metropolitan fragmentation by experts and scholars for the past 30 years is evidence that our political system is structured in favor of incremental change. The literature of political science is virtually unanimous in this characterization of our political system.

Further, the literature of urban politics reports the rarity of structural change on the order of consolidation. This rarity is not a result of lack of interest or support by leaders and "experts." Urban political scientist Michael Danielson in a somewhat pejorative tone points out the array of support for consolidations or area-wide governments.

In the hundred-odd metropolitan areas where campaigns for area-wide government have been launched, the civic associations, planning agencies, and universities have provided most of the shock troops, widespread support usually has come from the "big mules" of the central city: the bankers, merchants, downtown property owners, utility operators, and newspaper publishers, who hope metropolitan reform can save the central business district.

³Michael N. Danielson, "The Politics of Metropolitan Reform" in Metropolitan Politics: A Reader, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), pp. 248-249.

Despite this impressive collection of urban powers and leaders, consolidations in America have been very few. In most cases the results are those described, again, by Danielson:

* * * those somewhat incongruous revolutionaries, the middle class reformers and downtown businessmen, go forth to convince the metropolis of the need for fundamental change in the political system. Almost always, the campaign ends on election day in a shattering defeat for the plans and dreams of metropolitan reformers.⁴

This fact that Americans seldom vote for drastic changes in government is borne out by available data on consolidation elections and would probably be supported by data on the success of annexation elections as well, even though annexations are not nearly as drastic as consolidations. The question that arises is what is necessary in order to bring about a consolidation.

The answer falls in two areas. One involves popular votes and the other involves direct legislative action. There is virtually no research on the dynamics of the latter, primarily because only one modern example existed prior to the 1975 action of the Nevada legislature. In recent years, a good deal of research has been done on consolidation referenda. Most research, however, has been of the case study variety, examining one area. These studies exist for St. Louis, Cleveland, Miami, Nashville, Toronto, Jacksonville and Baton Rouge, among others. There have been few attempts at comparative research on consolidation elections and even fewer attempts to build theory in this area.

Political scientists Rosenbaum and Henderson, in a 1972 article, do attempt theory building.⁵ Specifically, two Florida cities and counties voted on consolidation on the same day in 1967. Jacksonville and Duval County and Tampa and Hillsborough County were very similar in size, racial composition and economy in 1967. The inside and outside city population ratios were almost identical. The authors conducted extensive, elite interviewing of business and civic leaders in both areas prior to the election.

Consolidation won overwhelmingly in Jacksonville with 64.7 percent of the vote and lost miserably in Tampa with only 28.4 percent in favor. The theory that Rosenbaum and Henderson set forth to explain these events and other consolidation elections is borrowed from the concepts developed by Chalmers Johnson in his book, Revolutionary Change.⁶ The authors conclude that in a developing nation or in an American city, causes and processes of revolutionary change are similar, although the vehicles will differ from coup or civil war in the former situation to a drastic restructuring of government in the latter instance.

Put too briefly and too simply, for radical change to occur, a situation of social disequilibrium must develop in a community, usually related to rapid population growth, rapid change in racial composition or severe social or economic dislocations. Certainly in their comparison between Tampa and Jacksonville, Rosenbaum and Henderson make a strong case for Johnson's disequilibrium theory. Jacksonville was undergoing the trauma of a massive political scandal and extreme sewage disposal problems. Tampa had no comparable problems. Other consolidations tend to fit the theory, too. The

⁴Ibid., p. 249.

⁵Walter A. Rosenbaum and Thomas A. Henderson, "Explaining Comprehensive Governmental Consolidation: Toward a Preliminary Theory," The Journal of Politics, Vol. 34, No. 2, May 1972, pp. 428-457.

⁶Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966).

citizens of Davidson County who had rejected consolidation with Nashville in 1958, approved consolidation in 1962. The "accelerator," to use Johnson's terminology in the Nashville context, was the imposition of a "wheel tax" by Nashville on county residents working in the city.⁷ In virtually no consolidation referendum have the simple arguments of greater efficiency and better government been sufficient to carry the day.

In a 1975 review of consolidation efforts, Vincent Marando of the University of Georgia supports the basic idea that consolidations are approved by voters only where several conditions exist. The problems that precipitated most consolidation drives, however, are well characterized by Marando.

The community problems which stimulated most governmental reform efforts were of a non-crisis nature; they could be considered inconvenient or at most serious. In the inconvenient problem category would be duplication of functions, too many administrative agencies, and lack of long-range planning. The serious problems would include lack of adequate water and sewer facilities, inequitable city-county tax bases, blight and congestion, and air and water pollution.⁸

There are no attempts to establish a theory for nonreferendum consolidations. The reason is pretty basic. There have been only nine legislatively mandated consolidations accomplished without voter approval in the United States. The Las Vegas-Clark County consolidation was only the second such legislative act since 1907 when the Hawaiian territorial legislature merged Honolulu and Honolulu County. The Indianapolis and Marion County merger of 1969 does not really need a theoretical explanation. The Republican legislature merged increasingly Democratic Indianapolis with Republican Marion County in an effort to blunt growing Democratic strength in the city. Practical politics, not a theory, explains the consolidation.

All of Clark County, Nevada, including the City of Las Vegas is heavily Democratic in registration. There are Republican officeholders in Clark County but they are few. The 33-member Clark County legislative delegation in 1975 included only two Republicans. Las Vegas city offices are nonpartisan. Three of seven county commissioners are Republicans. Practical politics of the Indianapolis variety did not account for the Las Vegas-Clark County consolidation. What then did account for it?

Two, and perhaps three, primary factors can be isolated as explanatory of the passage of the Las Vegas-Clark County consolidation law. First, there was widespread acceptance that there should be a better way to govern the Las Vegas Valley than the way it was being governed in 1975. Similar realizations have been present in all areas that have attempted consolidation. The distinguishing features present in Las Vegas-Clark County are discussed below after a discussion of the other two. Second, recognizing the historical failure of consolidation referenda across the nation, legislative proponents of consolidation and others favoring the idea of merger determined that a referendum on the matter would very likely fail. Indeed, opponents of Las Vegas-Clark County consolidation, recognizing the same fact, strongly urged a referendum. There was no crisis of government in the Las Vegas Valley, no political scandals creating a "get rid of 'em all" frame of mind and no general breakdown of services. Given the knowledge of consolidation referenda campaigns from 1949-1974, which had a 25 percent success rate, there was little reason to believe that a referendum election would be successful. The third factor explaining the passage of

⁷Brett W. Hawkins, Nashville Metro (Nashville, Tenn., Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), p. 59.

⁸Vincent L. Marando, "The Politics of City-County Consolidation," National Civic Review, Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 78.

S.B. 601 is less easily articulated since it deals with personalities and the ebb and flow of internal legislative politics.

The Nevada legislature is composed of only 60 members. Alaska's is the same size and there is no smaller bicameral state legislature. Because of its small size, relationships are highly personal in the Nevada legislature in the sense that each legislator comes to know every other one in some depth. They know one another's strengths, weaknesses and degree of integrity. There is high recognition of which legislator is most competent and most knowledgeable on which subject. Then, because the Nevada legislature is a biennial, part-time operation of true "citizen" legislators, the experts in certain areas are looked to by others for guidance to a far greater degree than in states where legislators are virtually full-time and have their own staffs.

Early in the 1975 session, the Clark County delegation appointed Senator James I. Gibson of Henderson as Chairman of a Special Committee to consider the Urban Action Committee report and the general question of governance in the Las Vegas Valley. A 16-year veteran of the legislature and a recognized expert in state and local government operations, Senator Gibson was a fortuitous choice. His reputation as an objective, fairminded chairman facilitated the development of the widest range of ideas in the early work of the Special Committee. He had also supported proposals over the years to streamline and improve urban government in Las Vegas Valley. After the consolidation idea was formulated, his knowledge of the legislative process and his appreciation of the political factors involved, combined with the exceptional prestige he enjoyed with his fellow legislators, made the passage of S.B. 601 a reality. It is also worth noting that the Nevada constitution has no local government home rule provisions and therefore the role of the legislature in Nevada local government is relatively significant.

As important as it was to have a legislator of exceptional ability and respect as the driving force behind the legislation, that factor alone cannot explain the passage of such a momentous political restructuring. Returning to the first factor in passage, widespread acceptance of the need for significant change, we can see a deeper and theoretical explanation.

As Marando points out in the article cited above, there is usually agreement among the civic elite as to the need for restructuring government. This group most often includes the media, the intellectuals, political reformers, downtown business leaders and others active in civic affairs such as the League of Women Voters. Such people compose the committees that draft charters and urge reforms in government. This was true in Las Vegas and Clark County. All of these types of people supported the concept of consolidation. At this point, however, differences between support for consolidation in Las Vegas-Clark County and in other areas develop.

Anyone who has ever observed the legislative process at local, state or national levels recognizes the fact that it is easier to prevent a thing from happening than it is to make it happen. As pointed out earlier, our governmental system is designed this way.

In a 1970 book entitled Power and Poverty, Peter Bachratz and Morton S. Baratz outlined a model of the political process built upon the observation that it is very difficult to bring about significant change.⁹ The authors call their conceptual framework the "nondecision" model. Greatly oversimplified, the nondecision model states that changes are prevented not by clear-cut, authoritative actions to prevent

⁹Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

them but by far more subtle, indeterminate obstacles which, because of their very nebulous, but real, nature, cannot be directly confronted or challenged. The nondecision model has levels of obstruction for reformers or those seeking systemic changes. The model also assumes that for any change proposed, there will be those desiring change and those committed to the existing situation and values. The first weapon of those committed to the status quo is what political theorist E. E. Schattschneider called the "mobilization of bias."¹⁰ This is the set of beliefs, values and traditions or "rules of the game" that maintain advantages for a certain group. Opponents of consolidation across the country have raised the specter of "big government," centralized power and even communist conspiracy to defeat such change. They have relied on our traditions of numerous elected offices, limited concentrations of power and our fears of anything that can be called socialistic or communistic in order to discredit consolidation attempts sometimes before they even get formulated. This mobilization of bias was the pattern in Las Vegas-Clark County over the previous decade. Suggestions were being made but decisions to proceed were never carried out.

If the initial barrier of the mobilization of bias is overcome and the idea of consolidation formulated and seriously raised, the second obstacle in the model comes into play. This is the institutional barrier. For consolidation, this barrier is raised at the local level in all cases and at the state level in most. Elected officials at the local level, because of their resources, their positions and their ready access to the media can raise very effective obstacles to a restructuring of government on the order of consolidation. Sometimes nonelected officials can be similarly effective, especially highly visible officials such as police chiefs. At any rate, it is very unusual for a consolidation proposal to move any farther if it is opposed to any degree by influential local officials.

The initial proposal considered by the 1975 Nevada legislature was for a massive annexation to the City of Las Vegas. County officials never supported this idea and the town boards of Paradise and Winchester definitely opposed this idea. The plan to disincorporate Las Vegas as a means of consolidating the urban areas was vehemently opposed by city officials. In both cases, opposition was sufficient to preclude serious legislative consideration. The institutional barrier was very effective. The ultimate plan which was unanimously endorsed by city and county commissions and agreed to by the town boards passed the institutional barrier at the local level. City commissioners viewed the proposal under which they would also be county commissioners as a means of retaining control of the city while they gained the added status and salary of county commissioners. Also, the districting plan was not a threat to incumbent commissioners. County commissioners viewed the proposal as a way of becoming involved in running the largest city in the county which would mean added status. The districting plan was also amenable to all incumbent county commissioners. The towns of Paradise, Winchester, Sunrise Manor and East Las Vegas generally supported the consolidation proposal for two reasons. First, it was viewed as far preferable to simple annexation because consolidation was just as much a county takeover of the city as it was the reverse. Second, the towns were all paying the maximum \$5 tax rate so the proposal could not cost property taxpayers any more than they were paying currently.

The plan also passed the institutional barrier at the state level which meant the concept would be drafted into legislation and considered. Passing the institutional barrier in the legislature required that legislators of power and prestige, including the speaker of the assembly and majority leader of the senate, actively supported the proposal as developed. Passing this barrier also required that the

¹⁰E. E. Schattschneider, The Semi-Sovereign People (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 71.

mechanics of producing a very complex piece of legislation were successfully dealt with by extraordinary means including the enlistment of Las Vegas and Clark County legal talent to augment the legislature's legal staff. Passing this barrier further required the enlistment of a former Legislative Counsel recognized as one of the state's foremost constitutional authorities to lend his technical skills and prestige to the undertaking. Each one of these factors was a victory for proponents of change and each was necessary for ultimate success. The absence of any one of these factors could well have been fatal because in the nondecision model, the smallest defect, the slightest flaw, is often adequate to result in nondecision.

Because everything went right in formulation, support and drafting, the third barrier was reached--the actual legislative passage process. The opponents of the consolidation legislation were essentially the elected representatives of the two other incorporated cities in the Las Vegas Valley, North Las Vegas and Henderson. An integral part of the legislation was a guarantee that these two cities and Boulder City would suffer no loss in state distributive taxes as a result of consolidation. The plan did, however, annex to Las Vegas the area known as Sunrise Manor which North Las Vegas had long hoped to annex. In addition, the three smaller cities seemed to feel that a significant growth in Las Vegas, along with the effect of merging many Las Vegas departments with those of the county, could not help but diminish their own positions. Implicit in this reaction was the fear that, at some future date, the new government would swallow the other cities. The fact that this would take future legislative action was not seen as adequate protection for Henderson and North Las Vegas.

Opposition took two principal forms. Legislators from North Las Vegas and Henderson strongly urged that consolidation must go to a referendum of the voters in the areas affected before it could become effective. Because they could not stop the legislation, the referendum proposal was the only viable position on which the opponents could take a stand. Giving the people a right to vote on a proposal is a "motherhood" issue. That is, it is very difficult to oppose such a demand without appearing authoritarian or elitist. The fact that this nation is built on representative rather than direct democracy is not always an adequate basis on which to deny a referendum demand. Proponents were well aware that a consolidation referendum would be an occasion made to order for distortions and confusion. To reduce such complex legislation to slogans and catch phrases either pro or con could even be seen as irresponsible. To modify or delay a proposal is a tactic used at the third barrier. If a referendum requirement had been added to the legislation, it would have been a perfect example of the workings of the nondecision model. Given our knowledge of consolidation referenda, the legislation very likely would have been defeated.

The second form taken by the opposition were the threats by officials of the City of North Las Vegas and, indirectly, the Nevada League of Cities to force a statewide referendum on S.B. 601. S.B. 601 contains extensive general law provisions by which other cities and counties in the future may come under consolidated government. The first form of opposition was the proposal that a local referendum be held not on the general law but on whether Las Vegas and Clark County should come under the law. The second form of referendum would have been a challenge to the entire law. Section 1 of article XIX of the Nevada constitution provides that any act of the legislature can be petitioned to referendum. A statewide referendum on the general law enabling consolidation by Las Vegas and Clark County would have been a risk in itself since the League of Cities seemed committed to opposing it. Even if the statewide referendum was successful, however, any future change in the law, no matter how minor, also would have to be submitted to statewide referendum. Win or lose, such a prospect was a poor one. The threat of a referendum petition was never carried through. Perhaps

it was realized that such an act was very much a two-edged sword.

The opponents used classic nondecision strategy to block or blunt the consolidation legislation, but the proponents had simply become too well organized and united for the nondecision tactics to work and the bill became law. The third barrier was passed.

Some readers may conclude that that is the end of the story. Success was achieved and everyone lived happily ever after. There is yet another step in the nondecision model and, like the other ones, it too can prevent intended changes from taking place. The fourth barrier is the one of successful implementation. All consolidation legislation involves a transition period and provides for tasks to be carried out during such a period and for dates by which certain things must be accomplished. S.B. 601 is no exception. Since July 1, 1975, local government officials with limited but formal legislative involvement have been occupied with implementation of S.B. 601. Theoretically, by January of 1977, all of the components of consolidation will be in place and working.

In retrospect, and recognizing the critical importance of passing the fourth barrier, it may have been preferable to have mandated and specified more of the components of the transition in the legislation and left less to the local officials. This was not done for two reasons. First, S.B. 601 was an extremely complex and lengthy bill as it was. To have been more specific in the bill, it would have been necessary to take a good deal more time to gather and digest a great amount of detail on city and county government, especially fiscal detail. There simply was not time to go into such specifics. Second, and more important, the final version of S.B. 601 had the strong support of both local governing bodies. Therefore, it was fair to assume that implementation of consolidation would be in hands both competent and friendly. At this writing, it is too early to conclude if either assumption was correct.

The major unknown at this stage in implementation is the effect of current litigation involving S.B. 601. Las Vegas has sued Clark County and there is a class action suit against both. Issues in the suits include state and federal constitutional questions too complex to detail here. There should be a Nevada Supreme Court ruling by late spring 1976. Almost as important as the litigation is the willingness of the local officials to cooperate to make consolidation work. The problem currently is a rather basic political one of keeping options open. While litigation is pending, there is a natural reluctance to commit fully to consolidation even though informed legal opinion, including that of the Attorney General and the Legislative Counsel, agree that the basic scheme of consolidation in S.B. 601 is sound. Suits before the court in January 1976, however, raise a great variety of questions with the combined effect of slowing, confusing and diffusing the transition toward consolidation. The year 1976 will determine if consolidation for Las Vegas and Clark County will overcome the fourth and final barrier in the nondecision model of political change.

NEVADA VOTING INFORMATION

The Bureau has published various kinds of voting information in years past. This year we are planning a report on Nevada's first Presidential primary, but this is not yet ready. We reproduce below some information slightly modified from an excellent pamphlet issued by Washoe County Registrar of Voters David L. Howard. The full pamphlet is available at the Registrar's Office in the Washoe County Courthouse.

1. Qualifications for Voter Registration

- a. You must be at least 18 years old and a citizen of the United States.
- b. You must be a resident of your county for 30 days and your precinct for 10 days immediately preceding the election.
- c. Persons convicted of a felony or dishonorably discharged from the military must have had their civil rights restored.
- d. Registration must be done in person except for members of the armed services or government employees and their dependents living out of state. Their registration, by law, may be processed through the mail.

2. Where May I Register?

You may register at the offices of the County Clerk (or, in Clark and Washoe Counties, the Registrar of Voters). During the last five days prior to the close of registration, the offices will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., including Saturday, which is always the last day of registration.

3. When Is the Last Day I May Register?

- a. Registration closes for the Presidential Primary Election April 24, 1976 at 9:00 p.m.
- b. Registration closes for the State Primary Election August 14, 1976 at 9:00 p.m.
- c. Registration closes for the General Election October 2, 1976 at 9:00 p.m.

4. How Long Does My Voter Registration Extend?

Voter registration is permanent, unless you fail to vote in the State General Election held in November of the even-numbered years. Although it is relatively important you vote in every election, failure to vote in the Presidential Primary; municipal; state primary or special elections will not invalidate your registration.

5. Must I Do Anything to Keep My Registration Current?

- a. The County Clerk's or Registrar of Voters' Offices must be notified of any change of address. If a voter's address is not current on Election Day, he may be challenged at the polls with the loss of his voting rights as a result. You may change your address by telephoning the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters up to two weeks prior to the close of registration for any election. For the last 2 weeks, it must be done in person.
- b. If you change your name or wish to change your party affiliation, you must then re-register in person. (REMEMBER, if you are considering running for a partisan office, any party affiliation change must have been made on or before September 1 of the year preceding the state primary election.) Also, the last day for changing your registration is July 21, 1976.

6. What Does Party Affiliation Mean?

- a. When registering to vote, you have the choice of affiliating with the Democratic, Republican or Independent-American Party.
- b. If you do not wish to affiliate, you may register as Non-partisan, which means you will not belong to any party. When registered as a Non-partisan, you may only vote for Non-partisan candidates in the State's Primary Election. In the State General Election and municipal elections you may vote for any of the candidates you choose, regardless of party.

Note: Voters registered as non-partisan will not be able to vote for partisan candidates in the Presidential Primary May 25, 1976.

7. Voting Procedures:

- a. Normal Voting is accomplished by going to the polling place where your precinct has been assigned and casting your ballot in the manner prescribed by law.
- b. Absentee Voting is permitted for any registered voter who is temporarily out of his voting jurisdiction at election time; is confined to his home due to illness or physical disability, or who is unable to go to a polling place.

8. How Can I obtain an Absentee Ballot?

- a. By law, if you are temporarily out of state, overseas or out of your voting jurisdiction, an absentee ballot may be obtained by writing the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters and requesting an absentee ballot to be sent to your temporary address. (Telephone requests can not be honored.) Your request must include your permanent address or last place of residence in your county, and your signature.
- b. Registered voters who are confined due to illness or disability may request an absentee ballot by writing the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters' Office and stating the reason that makes it impossible to go to the polling place and the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent.

NOTE: Hospitals and convalescent homes will be provided with forms for requesting absentee ballots for those voters who are unexpectedly confined and wish to vote.

9. When Should I Request an Absentee Ballot?

Your request should be made at least one month prior to the election in which you wish to vote absentee. The cutoff date for absentee requests is one week prior to the election. Requests received in the County Clerk's Office or the Registrar of Voters' Office after that time cannot be honored. Servicemen and overseas employed civilians who are legally registered should request their absentee ballot as soon as possible. (See Section 10b.)

10. Is There Any Other Way to Vote Absentee?

- a. If you are planning to be out of your voting jurisdiction on Election Day because of business trips, vacation, or some other reason that would not allow an absentee ballot to be mailed to you, you may vote in the office of the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters prior to your leaving town. This method of voting generally starts 21 days prior to the election and runs for two weeks, depending upon the availability of the printed ballots.

- b. If you should be unexpectedly called out of town on an emergency or confined due to illness, an absentee ballot may be obtained from the County Clerk or the Registrar of Voters during the last week prior to the election up to 5:00 p.m. Election Day.

IMPORTANT: All voted absentee ballots must be in the office of the County Clerk or Registrar of Voters no later than 7:00 p.m. Election Day. Any ballots received after that time cannot, by law, be counted!

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER FOR ELECTION '76

- April 24 Close of Registration for Presidential Primary Election.
- May 25 ELECTION DAY (Presidential Primary)
- June 14 First day that Independent Candidates may file a certificate of candidacy signed by required number of voters.
- June 14 First day for 10 or more registered voters to file a certificate of candidacy designating any partisan elective office or any non-partisan office.
- June 25 Last day an Independent Candidate may file a certificate of candidacy.
- July 9 Last day for 10 or more voters to file a certificate of candidacy designating any registered voter for nomination.
- July 17 Last day for any new political party to qualify by petition to Secretary of State.
- July 21 Last day for candidates to file for office; 5:00 p.m.
- July 21 Last day for registered voter named in certificate of candidacy filed by 10 or more registered voters to file acceptance of candidacy.
- July 21 Last day for challenge of candidates (Independent Candidates).
- July 21 Last day to change party affiliation.
- August 14 Close of registration for Primary Election.
- September 14 ELECTION DAY (Primary Election).
- September 14 Last day Absentee Ballots can be received; 7:00 p.m.
- October 2 Last day to register for General Election.
- October 26 Last day to request Absentee Ballot for General Election.
- November 2 ELECTION DAY (General Election).
- November 2 Last day Absentee Ballots can be received; 7:00 p.m.

Nevada Public Affairs Report
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 University of Nevada, Reno

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