

NEVADA BLUEPRINT

PROTECTING & EXPANDING THE MIDDLE CLASS



By the Nevada Senate Democrats and the Assembly Democratic Caucus.

FELLOW NEVADANS:

As Nevada Democrats, we share a core belief: **Every Nevadan deserves a fair shot at the American Dream.** That starts with a quality education, and it includes access to good jobs that can support a family, a safe community in which to live, and a secure retirement. Achieving the dream is not a guarantee – it requires personal accountability and hard work – but it also should not be impossible.

Nevadans have a natural instinct for hard work and ingenuity. In the 2015 Legislative Session, Democrats' focus is on creating opportunities that lay the necessary foundation for Nevadans to improve their personal economic security.

We must ensure that those who work hard and play by the rules are rewarded for it – whether that means having access to affordable higher education, or the ability to buy a home, raise a family, and retire with peace of mind. We must also ensure that the middle-class families who suffered most during the Great Recession will not be punished again as we transition into a 21st-Century Nevada.

Democrats are at the table ready to work and look forward to honest conversations, fair hearings, and debates on our ideas to address the needs of all Nevadans. If we come together now to put middle-class families first, then our future is undeniably bright.

To that end, we offer our Nevada Blueprint – an agenda outlining our principles and legislative goals that will help every Nevadan reach their own American Dream – from childhood to retirement. We hope you'll join us in working to achieve these goals on behalf of all Nevadans.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron D. Ford".

Aaron D. Ford,
Senate Democratic Leader



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marilyn R. Kirkpatrick".

Marilyn Kirkpatrick,
Assembly Democratic Leader





NEVADA BLUEPRINT

Fighting for *all* Nevadans from kids to seniors.

► Early Education

Success starts with high-quality pre-K through 12th-grade education.



► Higher Education

Which leads to opportunities to receive higher education right here in Nevada.



► Economic Opportunities

Which lead to an educated and skilled workforce that new and existing businesses can hire from.



► Security for Seniors

Which leads to Nevadans being able to retire securely.

NEVADA BLUEPRINT 2015:

Protecting & Expanding the Middle Class

NEVADA BLUEPRINT

The following is our Blueprint for Nevada – an agenda outlining our principles and legislative goals that will help every Nevadan reach their own American Dream – from childhood to retirement.



Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ Continue fighting for universal full-day kindergarten and funding for pre-Kindergarten.
- ▶ Prepare our students for high-tech jobs by providing well-funded Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education programs.

Early Education Pre-K through 12th Grade

We believe all Nevada children deserve an equal opportunity to succeed so they can compete for the good-paying jobs of the future. To give our kids a fair shot, we must invest in our schools and come together as a community to ensure accountability. Once in our schools, students must be challenged by highly qualified teachers and a rigorous curriculum that helps them achieve their very best.

- ▶ Build new schools and hire more qualified teachers to relieve overcrowding and reduce class sizes.
- ▶ Ensure our teachers have the resources and tools necessary to provide a good education by funding professional development programs.
- ▶ Expand English Language Learner (ELL) programs to give all children a fair shot at the American Dream.



Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ Make college more affordable for middle-class families by reducing student debt, providing tax breaks for education expenses, expanding scholarship programs, and making it easier to save for college.
- ▶ Provide Community College Workforce Grants.
- ▶ Enhance our current higher education system by properly funding the development of a medical school at UNLV and establishing a Tier 1 research university in Nevada.
- ▶ Provide apprenticeships for vocational training.

Higher Education

College graduates on average will earn \$1 million more in their lifetimes than adults with only a high school diploma. That's why we believe higher education should be affordable and accessible to every Nevadan. After all, we cannot expect to attract new businesses if we do not have an educated workforce from which they can hire. Unfortunately, it has become harder for middle-class families to send their kids to college, while graduates are saddled with increasing debt. Legislative Democrats will work to help graduates pay off their college loans and make college more affordable for middle-class families.



Economic Opportunities

Protecting Your Pocketbook

Nevada's economy has begun to recover from the Great Recession. While this is good news, we also know that not every Nevadan's personal economy has recovered. In Nevada, the cost of living is increasing, but wages are staying the same. That does not add up. We believe it's past time that we reward hard work with fair wages. We must ensure that our jobs pay enough for workers to support their families, and that we keep talented Nevadans right here at home.

Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ **REWARD HARD WORK WITH FAIR PAY** by requiring that women earn equal pay for doing the same work as men.
- ▶ Raise the minimum wage in Nevada.
- ▶ Make child care more affordable.
- ▶ **ENACT A SALES TAX HOLIDAY:** On a designated holiday, Nevadans should be exempt from paying a sales tax on back-to-school clothes and school supplies, including computers and new technology for our students.
- ▶ Ensure that Nevada's veterans and military families get a fair shot at economic success.
- ▶ Help local business startups get off the ground, including businesses owned by women and minorities.
- ▶ Support an earned sick leave program that will allow workers to take time off when they or a close family member gets sick without being docked a day's wages or fearing for their job.
- ▶ **LOWER CAR REGISTRATION FEES:** Nevadans are forced to pay extremely high fees to register and reregister their cars. We should lower these high registration fees and help middle-class Nevadans keep their hard-earned money.

Security for Seniors

Nevada's seniors have worked hard their entire lives and deserve to retire with dignity and respect. Our seniors should not have to go broke to receive the help and care they need. Legislative Democrats are ready to fight for our seniors.

Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ Protect retirement savings and pensions, for which our seniors have worked hard.
- ▶ Build public and private partnerships to help ensure seniors can receive the care they need while remaining independent and able to stay in their homes as long as they want to.
- ▶ Provide education and training to health care professionals in screening, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral and cognitive diseases prevalent in older adults.
- ▶ Support higher education programs for our seniors.
- ▶ Support the Nevada CARE Act.





Protecting Your Rights

In addition to fighting to improve our education system and create more economic opportunities, Legislative Democrats believe we must also work to protect the constitutional rights of all Nevadans. The right to vote is one of the pillars of a free democracy, and that's why we will stand against attempts to make it harder for seniors, women, and military families to cast a ballot. In addition to opposing any efforts that will make voting harder for Nevadans, we will also introduce legislation aimed at encouraging voter participation.

Moreover, the right to one's day in court is fundamental. That is why we will vehemently oppose legislation that limits Nevadans' full recovery for wrongs committed against them.

Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ Fight to ensure that voting is free, fair, and accessible for all eligible voters in Nevada.
- ▶ Protect every Nevadan's right to his or her day in court.
- ▶ Encourage voter participation by providing for same-day voter registration, implementing Election Day vote centers, and automating the DMV's voter registration system.

Revenue & Funding

We will not mince words. Nevada needs a new revenue structure. If we want our state to be competitive in the 21st-Century, we must invest in the critical needs that will help our economy grow.

Legislative Democrats believe in a state with a strong and secure middle class that is not asked to carry the tax burden while large corporations use loopholes to avoid paying their fair share. We can do this while continuing to foster an environment that helps businesses succeed. Legislative Democrats are committed to ensuring that **any new revenue plan we consider is a comprehensive solution that is fair, sustainable, and stable for the long term – not a short-term Band-Aid.**



Our Nevada Blueprint Will:

- ▶ **CLOSE THE BIG-BUSINESS PROPERTY TAX LOOPHOLE:** Currently, most Nevadans pay more in property tax than do some of the largest corporations in our state, including Donald Trump. That is just not fair. Our Nevada Blueprint will close the loopholes that allow big corporations to avoid paying property taxes like the rest of us.
- ▶ **REVISE THE BUSINESS LICENSE FEE** to protect our small businesses by ensuring fees remain consistent and low.
- ▶ **LUXURY DISCRETIONARY SPENDING TAX:** Legislative Democrats will work to close the tax loopholes on luxury spending to meet the needs of today. Since this tax was created in 2003, various venues have avoided paying their fair share through complicated loopholes. By closing these loopholes, we will ensure that people who can afford to make luxury purchases like \$5,000 bottles at nightclubs or \$800 multiday music festival tickets are paying their fair share.



Governor Sandoval's proposal is a welcome starting point for the conversation about a new revenue structure for Nevada. We agree with the Governor that we must hold our largest and most stable corporations accountable for doing business in our state.

However, Legislative Democrats are concerned about the impact of new revenue on small businesses. To create an environment in which our small businesses can prosper, we must minimize the obstacles to starting a new business or growing an existing one. One way to do this is by exempting small businesses, especially brand-new ones, from increased taxes or fees. Doubling fees for a small business will lead to fewer people creating businesses and fewer good-paying jobs.

As Legislative Democrats review different revenue proposals this session, we will continually look for ways to ensure that big corporations pay their fair share so that the burden is not placed on middle-class families and small businesses.

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