

# Civics & Advocacy 101 Nevada



Brought to you by the League of Women Voters of Nevada  
Learn more about League at: [www.lwvnv.org](http://www.lwvnv.org)



# Why is it important to learn how government works?

- Government:
  - Manages important aspects of society with input from community members (You!)
  - Includes agencies, offices, laws, public policies, and regulations
  - Provides community members a voice in education, criminal justice, & our economy
  - Strives to achieve the common good based on public input
- Who does government affect?
  - Every community member
- How can a community member engage with government?
  - Vote
  - Provide feedback during elections
  - Engage during governing processes

# Influencing Government

- Register to vote
  - Nevada offers various ways to register to vote
    - You can register to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles
      - When you get a new driver's license or ID
      - When you update your driver's license or ID
    - You can register to vote online if you have a valid Nevada driver's license or ID
      - Simply go to: <http://nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters/registering-to-vote>
      - You can also update your voter registration on this same website
    - You can register to vote in person at any county clerk or registrar's office
      - Find your clerk or registrar here: <http://nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters/county-clerk-contact-information>
- Once you are registered to vote
  - You'll receive information about upcoming elections
  - You can find information about elections here: <http://nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters>

- Engage During Elections

- The best time to talk to future leaders is during elections
  - Candidates attend many types of public events
  - Candidates seek support & will listen to concerns
- How to find opportunities to engage with candidates
  - Candidates maintain websites & social media accounts
  - Sign up for a candidate's newsletter
- Tips for engaging with candidates
  - Be passionate, but also be polite
  - Be respectful of others who also want to engage with the candidate
  - Do not expect any candidate to agree with you 100 percent
- Going the extra mile: Prepare before speaking with a candidate
  - Educate yourself about topics through reliable sources
  - Know what's possible & stay within those bounds

# Engaging During Governing Processes

- Creating & Passing: Laws, rules, and regulations
  - In most instances, governing bodies allow for public input
  - The trick is knowing each level of government's:
    - Scope of authority
    - Governing processes
  - To find this information, you first need to find the right governing body for your issue
- Finding the right governing body
  - You can find information about Nevada and its governing bodies & officials at
    - <http://nv.gov/>
  - You can also reach out to
    - Advocacy groups, such as League of Women Voters of Nevada
      - League specializes in understanding how government works
      - Including each governing body's scope of power & processes

# Levels of Government: The Federal Government

- Governing Document: The U.S. Constitution
  - Allocates some powers to the federal government
  - Allocates the remaining powers for state governments
  - <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>
- Three Constitutional Branches of Government
  - Executive: The President
    - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/executive-branch>
      - Elected indirectly through the Electoral College
      - Consists of the President, the cabinet, and agencies that implement federal laws
      - The President is our Head of State
        - Signs or vetoes laws
        - Sees that all laws and Supreme Court rulings are enforced
        - Works with Congress to write laws and pass budgets
        - Conducts diplomatic relations with foreign countries

- Legislative: Congress

- Elected directly by the people of a state

- Bicameral: two houses

- House of Representatives

- <https://www.house.gov/>

- 435 members who represent geographic districts in a state

- Members are elected every two years

- All bills that raise revenue must start in the House

- Senate

- <https://www.senate.gov/>

- 100 members who represent all the states

- 2 members from each state

- Members are elected every six years

- Works with the House to pass laws and budgets

- Confirms executive branch appointees & federal court judges

- Judiciary: Federal Courts

- <http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts>
- Federal judges are appointed & serve for life (until a judge retires, steps down, or is impeached)
- Federal courts rule on matters under federal law & the US Constitution
  - 96 District Courts
  - 13 Courts of Appeal
  - U.S. Court of Claims
  - U.S. Court of International Trade
  - U.S. Bankruptcy Courts
- People who sue in most federal courts & who are dissatisfied may
  - Appeal up to a court of appeals
  - Can appeal up to the Supreme Court
- The Supreme Court
  - 9 justices recommended by the President & confirmed by the Senate
  - The justices decide which cases to accept (not all cases are accepted)



# Nevada's Governing Offices

- State Government

- <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/nevada-state-government-overview>

- Three branches

- Executive: The largest of the three branches

- Each executive branch officer serves for four years

- <http://nv.gov/government/>

- Governor: Chief executive of the state

- Creates the state budget
        - Signs or vetoes bills
        - Ensures laws are properly executed
        - Promotes economic development

- Lieutenant Governor

- Presides over the Nevada Senate and casts a vote in the case of tie
        - Serves as the acting governor when the governor is out of state or ill
        - Chairs the Commission on Tourism and Economic Development

- Secretary of State
  - Responsible for overseeing elections, commercial recordings, securities, and notaries
- State Treasurer
  - Oversees the state treasury & sets investment policies for state funds
  - Administers the Unclaimed Property Division
  - Administers the Millennium Scholarship and other college savings programs
- State Controller
  - Responsible for paying the state's debts and state employees' salaries
  - Maintains the official accounting records
  - Prepares the annual statement of the state's financial status and public debt

- Attorney General
  - Chief law enforcement officer
  - Provides legal services to the state and state agencies
  - Defends or prosecutes cases involving the state or state agencies
- Board of Regents
  - Makes funding recommendations for higher education to the legislature
  - Creates policies to govern higher education
  - Hires and fires institution presidents and the chancellor

- Legislature: “The People’s House”
  - [https://www.leg.state.nv.us/General/AboutLeg/General\\_Short.html](https://www.leg.state.nv.us/General/AboutLeg/General_Short.html)
    - Represents the people of the state directly by geographic districts
    - Bicameral, two houses: Assembly & Senate
    - Manages state laws & budgets
    - Assembly
      - 42 members
      - Elected every two years
    - Senate
      - 21 members
      - Elected every four years
  - Judiciary: The state courts
  - [http://nvcourts.gov/Supreme/Court\\_Information/About\\_the\\_Nevada\\_Judiciary/](http://nvcourts.gov/Supreme/Court_Information/About_the_Nevada_Judiciary/)
    - Municipal
    - Justice
    - District
    - Nevada Supreme Court
    - All hear cases related to local and state laws

# Local Governments: County and City

- City and County Government
  - Councils, Commissions, & Boards
    - All work with the state government to meet local needs
    - Power is allocated to county and city bodies by the legislature
    - Services provided:
      - Police
      - Fire
      - Roads
      - Zoning
      - Permits
      - Water
  - <http://nv.gov/government/cities-counties/>

# Effective Engagement & Advocacy

- Who & Where
  - To effectively engage, you must determine where to go to be heard
  - Questions to answer:
    - Is my issue a state, county, or city issue?
    - Is my issue a law or a regulation?
    - Am I having a problem related to a public entity?
  - Try a website search:
    - <http://nv.gov/>
  - Reach out to trusted sources
    - League of Women Voters of Nevada
    - Chambers of Commerce
    - Labor Unions
    - Non-profit advocacy groups

# Input Types at Various Levels

- Federal
  - Input on potential laws (bills)
    - Congress
      - There are no opportunities to provide public comments during Congressional hearings
      - Contact your member of the House directly
        - Call your Representative's Washington D. C. office or Nevada office
        - You can find your members of the House here: <http://nv.gov/government/federal/>
          - Click on that person's name to see her/his contact information
      - Contact your Senators directly
        - Every state has two Senators who both represent the whole state
        - You can find our Senators' contact information here:
          - <http://nv.gov/government/federal/>
          - Click on that person's name to see her/his contact information

- State

- Input on potential laws (bills)

- Nevada's legislature

- Allows for public comment at initial hearings

- Find out how to provide public comments through the LWVN Advocacy Guide

- <https://lwvnblog.org/2017/01/22/lwvlv-2017-advocacy-guide/>

- This guide will walk you through how to:

- Submit comments

- Contact your legislator

- Use social media to provide input

- Governor

- Once the legislature passes a bill it goes to the Governor's Office

- The Governor must then decide whether to sign or veto

- Community members can provide comments to the Governor through

- Phone calls

- Emails

- Social media posts

- <http://gov.nv.gov/contact/>

- **Local Governing Bodies**

- **County and City**

- County and city governing bodies offer opportunities to provide public comments
      - Find the body with jurisdiction over your issue
      - Find that body's webpage & refer to meeting information
      - Look for the Agenda, which will show when & where to be to provide public comments
      - You can also contact your representative on commissions and councils
      - The body's website will have ways to find your representative through your address
        - Call your representative
        - Email your representative
    - <http://nv.gov/government/cities-counties/>

- **Other Boards, Councils, Commissions, Committees**

- Education <http://nv.gov/education/>
      - Boards of Trustees
    - Zoning
      - Planning Commission
    - Energy
      - Public Utilities Commission (PUC)
    - <http://nv.gov/agency/department/>



# Interim (between sessions) Legislative Bodies

- Legislative Commission

- Acts in place of the legislature in-between legislative sessions
- Meets every few months
- <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Interim2017/Committee/1358>

- Interim Finance

- Manages the legislature's contingency fund (\$)
- Meetings periodically
- <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Interim2017/Committee/1360/Overview>

- Interim Studies

- The legislature can create “study” committees to run during the interim
  - Usually the study will end with some sort of recommendation
- The full legislature may act on the recommendation in the next session
- Study committees have public comment segments on the agenda
  - The public can directly contact committee members through email or by voice
- You can follow interim committees here:
- <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Interim2017/CommitteeList>

- About the League of Women Voters
- Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters on February 14, 1920, just months before the 19th amendment's ratification. She understood newly enfranchised women would need support registering to vote, maintaining access to a fair ballot, and advocating for legislation supporting healthy families and strong communities.
- Today, League continues to assist voters, protect civic engagement, and much more. In everything we do, however, we strictly maintain our nonpartisan status; so, while League does encourage women to seek public office, we do not endorse candidates nor do we work directly with any political party.
- We hold regular community meetings, provide a Voters Guide, hold candidate forums, and do regular voter registration drives
- Please contact us at [info@lwvsn.org](mailto:info@lwvsn.org)
  - Or follow League of Women Voters Of Nevada On Facebook