



32nd Special Session Summary

The 32nd Special Session adjourned Sine Die shortly after midnight on August 6, 2020. Unlike the 31st Special Session a few weeks ago, the 32nd Special Session was focused more on policy than on the budget.

Throughout the 32nd Special Session, NSEA engaged primarily on three (3) bills:

- Assembly Joint Resolution 1
- Senate Bill 3
- Senate Bill 4

Once again, educators and NSEA were a strong presence at the special session. As a result of the efforts of educators and our labor and community allies, we emerge from this session closer to generating new and necessary revenue for Nevada. We have a legal mechanism that could allow education support professionals to obtain pandemic unemployment assistance. Finally, we blocked a dangerous proposal to shield school districts from COVID-related liability, giving us the chance to win greater health and safety protections for students and educators when we return to school buildings this school year.

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 1 (AJR1)

On the first day of the 31st Special Session, hundreds of educators donned red face coverings and lined both sides of Carson Street from the Legislative Building to the Capitol with a clear call to Fund Healthy Schools. We chanted “Be Brave. Be Bold. New Revenue’s the Way to Go!”

Our efforts post-31st Session did not end there. Since our impressive rally outside the Legislative Building on July 8, 2020, educators continued to make hundreds of calls and sent thousands of emails in the effort to fund healthy schools. We continued to mobilize for new revenue as the Governor signed into law hundreds of millions of dollars in painful cuts, including \$156 million in cuts to K-12 Public Education.

These prior efforts paid off during the 32nd Special Session in the form of Assembly Joint Resolution 1 (AJR1). AJR1 would amend the Constitution to generate critical new revenue for Nevada by increasing the mining tax from 5% of net proceeds to 7.75% of gross proceeds. AJR1 could also result in 25% of dedicated revenues to be spent for educational purposes.

Nevada is the world’s 5th largest producer of gold. The same week that AJR1 was heard, gold hit a record high of \$2000/oz, yet the mining industry pays very little in state taxes. AJR1, which would generate nearly a half-billion dollars in new revenue for Nevada each year, is the right-sized treatment of an industry that has enjoyed a sweetheart deal since Nevada’s beginnings. The proposal is also significant enough to move the needle on the chronic underfunding of Nevada’s schools and other vital health and human services.

The Nevada State Education Association stood in strong support. AJR 1 passed both the Senate and Assembly. In the next Legislative Session, it must pass both houses again in the same form. At that point, it would go to the 2022 ballot to be voted on by the people of Nevada. NSEA will keep our pressure on until the mining industry pays its fair share in taxes and Nevada’s schools are fully funded.

SENATE BILL 3

NSEA also engaged in SB3 which revised provisions related to unemployment compensation.

NSEA represents thousands of education support professionals (ESPs) who provide vital services to children in Nevada's public education system, including nutrition services, instructional assistance, school secretaries, maintenance and operations, and student transportation.

Many of these employees work and are paid only for 9, 10, or 11 months per year and are not eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer months. Most ESPs in Nevada work for less than a living wage and depend on summer jobs to make ends meet. For example, a starting instructional assistant in the Clark County School District makes \$11.12 per hour. Working only 9 months, they would make just over \$17,000 for the school year, close to poverty wages. Unfortunately with the pandemic, summer job opportunities have been severely limited.

NSEA has been working with the Governor's office and others to figure out how these employees could benefit from programs like Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). While SB3 does not directly resolve this issue, it does give the Administration the flexibility they would need to implement a fix in the event PUA or some other federal relief program becomes available.

NSEA supported SB3 as Education Support Professionals told their stories of financial hardship this summer. We will continue to work on a more permanent fix in the next legislative session.

SENATE BILL 4

SB4 was one of the most controversial bills during the 6-day Special Session and the very last bill to be heard. SB4 in its original form included language that would have limited COVID-related liability for Nevada employers, including school districts. This provision was a poison apple being served to teachers, support staff professions, and other licensed professionals across the state. NSEA adamantly opposed such a rotten provision.

While we understand there are no perfect solutions to many of the issues we face during this crisis, NSEA has not been willing to yield on the issue of health and safety in our classrooms, our cafeterias, and our bus yards.

In less than 18 hours, NSEA mobilized a socially distanced protest outside of the Legislature alongside labor and community partners in the Protect Nevada Workers Coalition. We publicly called attention to a dangerous plan to shield employers from COVID-related liability, which would be a strong disincentive for employers to ensure workplace safety. We chanted, “Kill the Bill, Not the Workers!”

NSEA members sent over 1600 emails to the Governor and Legislature and made dozens of calls to provide passionate public comment to the State Senate at 1:30 in the morning.

These collective efforts were too much for elected officials to ignore. On the final day of Special Session, an amendment to SB4 was introduced removing the language limiting the liability for school district. This was an important win for teachers, support staff professions, and other licensed professionals across the state.

In solidarity with labor partners and community allies, NSEA took no new position on SB4, because the bill did not protect all workers. An injury to one, is an injury to all.

The bill passed both the Senate and Assembly.