

## 2019 NPA Legislative Committee/Lobbyist Update

The 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the Nevada Legislature came to a close in early June. It was a record-breaking session for Nevada and for NPA. We cannot possibly cover everything Nevada and NPA accomplished in a single, readable newsletter page, but here is a quick summary of the session “by the numbers”.

A lot happened during the session, and behavioral/mental health issues featured prominently. For the most part, the goal of legislation impacting behavioral/mental health was to address Nevada’s mental healthcare crisis by increasing access to care. Legislation which would limit patient access to care and/or threatened psychologist practice was successfully stopped or amended (with the notable exception of AB 285 and Third Party Observations).

1<sup>st</sup> Ever: Nevada is home to our nation’s first female-majority legislature; first female-majority high court, and first African-American Attorney General.

1,102 Bills Introduced: And, the NPA Legislative Team read, at minimum, a detailed summary of every single bill; these bills included an historic number of bills related to behavioral/mental health.

100+ Detailed Review Bills: Directly and indirectly related to behavioral/mental healthcare and/or psychologists underwent detailed review by at least two members of the NPA Legislative Team.

70 Monitored Bills (up from just 33 in 2017): Directly impacting behavioral/mental healthcare and/or psychologists were closely monitored by the NPA Legislative Team.

39 Action Bills (up from just 14 in 2017): NPA Legislative Team took action in response to these bills.

NPA Legislative Action Matters: NPA advocacy during the legislative session impacted the everyday work of psychologists. A **short** list of accomplishments include:

- NPA supported increasing access to treatment for those with severe mental illness while successfully protecting **psychological testing** within psychologists' scope of practice (SB 37)
- NPA supported revisions to the Legal 2000 process to **ensure access to care** while **protecting patient rights** (AB 85)
- NPA successfully prevented threats to ban pre-employment **screening conducted by psychologists** (AB 132)
- NPA supported increased accountability and **patient protections** for **health insurance** (AB 170)
- NPA supported establishment of the Nevada Interagency Advisory Council on **Homelessness to Housing** and worked to ensure that psychologists will be “at the table” (AB 174)
- NPA helped initiate legislation to address **psychologists' paneling issues** - now insurers must provide reasons for panel denial to the provider and the Division of Insurance for annual aggregate reporting (SB 234). NPA’s work on this topic continues, and NPA leadership has applied for an APA grant to support our ongoing efforts.
- NPA lead the opposition and helped defeat legislation that would have required **informed consent of all legal guardians** prior to the provision of any type of behavioral (not medical) services to a minor (SB 247)
- NPA navigated the complex legislative space surrounding **Third Party Observation** of independent medical evaluations (IME), and will continue to closely follow the issue (AB 285)
- NPA supported the establishment of a Task Force to examine the **relinquishment of children** into protective care due to unmet (behavioral) healthcare needs (AB 387)

- NPA advocated for and supported the creation of the **Patient Protection Commission** (SB 544)

As we turn our attention from the past legislative session to the current interim, NPA is focused on several fronts.

Historically, the biggest inter-session focus for NPA is the **Legislative Committee on Health Care**.

Nearly all major health related issues are either telegraphed or taken up during this statutory legislative committee. The '19-'20 interim promises to be no different. The composition of the six person committee reflects the Democratic membership dominance in the Legislature. Four lawmakers—including the chair and vice-chair—are Democrats. The other two members are Republican. Interestingly, they're also doctors:

- Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen, Chair
- Senator Julia Ratti, Vice Chair
- Senator Joseph (Joe) Hardy, M.D.
- Senator Joyce Woodhouse
- Assemblywoman Connie Munk
- Assemblywoman Robin L. Titus, M.D.

It's a busy interim committee, all eight meetings have already been scheduled with the first calendared for Wednesday, November 20 at 9 am. Currently, no agenda is available.

Another trio of interim committees we'll be keeping an eye on are the **Regional Behavioral Health Policy Boards**. The Washoe Board is headed up by Senator Julia Ratti, the Southern Nevada Regional Board is chaired by Assemblyman Greg Hafen and Senator Pete Goicoechea leads the Rural Board. Each of these boards is set-up to **include a psychologist**, and NPA will be following up on this.

Several bills passed during the last session took effect on the first of October, the remaining bills become law on January 1. It may take months, or longer, but we will begin to see how the new laws play out affecting psychologists around the state. And you'll find no better judges than **you, licensed psychologists and members of NPA**. Let us know what you see and hear. Good or bad. Did the changes work as designed? If not, we need to know. Who knows, what you report back to us may become the genesis of a bill next session.

Finally, NPA will continue to offer recommendations to Governor Sisolak's office to **fill vacancies on the Board of Psychological Examiners and the Commission on Behavioral Health**. We recently followed up with the governor's staffers tasked with vetting and suggesting appointments. The openings need filling by qualified licensed psychologists. We continually make our voices heard.

Respectfully submitted,

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