

I appreciate the challenges facing the largely rural communities of Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, northern Washoe, Pershing, and White Pine Counties and am committed to doing everything I can to help them improve the quality of life of their citizens. I have been working on a number of initiatives to promote economic development, expand and improve health care, support education, enhance the environment, and improve transportation services throughout northern Nevada.

Economic Development

As the son of a hardrock miner, I understand first-hand the importance of mining to our state and particularly to northern Nevada. Mining employs about 8,800 Nevadans at an average annual salary of more than \$63,000 – almost twice as much as the average salary for all jobs in Nevada. That is why I have consistently supported mining and worked hard last year to persuade the Department of Interior to revise its 1997 Mill Site Opinion, which had severely limited mineral development on public lands. I also worked with the Department of Interior to develop an innovative bond that allowed the Coeur-Rochester Mine in Pershing County to remain in operation.

I have been a leading advocate of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which helps ensure that our local governments are fairly compensated for losses to their tax base that result from the presence of federal land in their communities. This program provides assistance to local governments to provide critical services to their citizens and gives them the resources to invest in their economic future. Last year, I helped secure nearly \$600,000 for Eureka County, \$2 million each for Pershing and Lander Counties, \$2.4 million for White County, \$3.3 million for Humboldt County and \$6.6 million for Elko County.

Additionally, I am working to maintain rural Nevada post offices, which often serve as the economic and social anchor of towns. I have introduced legislation to provide economic development assistance to rural communities where post offices have been closed. I heard from many concerned Ely residents when the Postal Service closed their historic downtown post office, and I am pleased that after I took the issue to the Postmaster General, the Postal Service agreed to lease the Old Ely Post Office to White Pine County for one dollar per year.

It is also important that we invest in our tourism industry to strengthen our local economies. That is why I secured \$4.5 million for the California Trail Interpretive Center near Elko. When completed, the Center will chronicle the 19th century overland journal of more than 300,000 settlers and will be an important tourist destination in northern Nevada. I also have introduced legislation that will designate the Great Basin Heritage Route. It will not only celebrate the rich historical, environmental, and cultural heritage of the Great Basin but also support tourism-based economic development in White Pine County.

Improving Health Care Services

I want to make better health care available to every Nevadan by cutting costs, improving quality, and expanding access. I would like to share with you a few initiatives that I have been working on to improve health care in northern Nevada.

I have been working to improve health care services throughout rural Nevada. I secured \$500,000 last year for Nevada Rural Hospital Partners telemedicine program to enable them to use better technology that will help bring telemedicine to a greater number of rural Nevada communities. When this program is fully implemented, thousands more rural Nevadans will be able to consult with doctors in Reno, Las Vegas, and around the country without leaving their local hospitals.

Additionally, I have been fighting to improve Nevadans' cancer care, including securing millions of dollars in federal funding to help create the Nevada Cancer Institute. This leading edge cancer center will conduct research and provide treatment for Nevadans so they don't have to travel far away for care.

Expanding Educational Opportunities

As someone whose life was transformed by education, I am strongly committed to providing a high quality education to all of our children. I understand the unique educational challenges facing Nevada's rural communities. During a meeting earlier this year with school superintendents from around the state, I heard that rural counties desperately need new school buses—so I introduced a bill that will pay 75 percent of the cost of new buses for rural school systems.

I also have been working hard to expand computer access for rural students. Students increasingly need computer skills to compete for jobs, but rural schools often do not have access to high technology. I was pleased to secure federal funding to supply laptop computers to McDermitt Combined School. These computers are available for students to use at school and at home and will ensure that these Humboldt County students have the skills to succeed in our increasingly technologically-based economy.

Protecting Nevada's Rich Natural Heritage

Our state has a rich natural heritage that must be protected for the enjoyment of current and future generations of Nevadans. I was proud to help pass legislation to establish the 77,180-acre Great Basin National Park in White Pine County, Nevada's first national park. I also have always worked hard to ensure that federal policy remains sensitive to local concerns. With local input from residents of Humboldt and Pershing Counties, I was able to pass improvements to the Black Rock Desert legislation to ensure public access to well-used roads and wilderness areas.

We must be vigilant in protecting our state from Mormon crickets, invasive species, and other threats. For example, in an effort to help rural Nevada end its worst infestation in 40 years, I secured \$20 million in emergency spending to control and eradicate Mormon crickets in Nevada, Utah, and Idaho. This money will give rural counties the support they need to protect their communities from future infestations. Several years ago, I also helped establish the Nevada Arid Rangeland Initiative through the University of Nevada, Reno, to control invasive species and weeds in Nevada. UNR has become a leader in the West in addressing the issues affecting our rangelands, helping ensure the environmental and economic health of many communities throughout the state.

Transportation Investments

As a resident of Searchlight, I also appreciate the transportation challenges facing small, rural communities throughout northern Nevada. I strongly support rural transportation programs and secured \$900,000 in last year's Transportation Appropriations bill for rural transit – on top of the \$2 million I secured for such programs the previous year. This funding will both invest in rural transit infrastructure, including bus facilities and vehicles, and help defray the costs of service to rural Nevadans. I also have strongly supported Nevada's rural airports, and I have helped provide funds to improve service at the Ely and Elko airports.

For more information visit my Web-Site at <http://reid.senate.gov>