

STRATEGY

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by the staff at my office, by the Commission in public hearings outside my office with the three major disciplines (law enforcement, treatment and education), to gather the information to allow us to clearly produce a strategy that would clearly, as I mentioned, fuse together the three disciplines, add in community organizations, and present a strategy that would maximize the use of federal dollars and then ask that those federal dollars are supplemented by state dollars to the tune of 32 million dollars, as you have seen in the report. We are asking for these funds over a biennial or over a period of two years. It also required a lot of information gathering from the three disciplines, working together with

statistics, finding out what was being done in terms of law enforcement, treatment and education, what was the magnitude of the problem, what was the "prevalent drug-of-choice," finding out how much alcohol affected our population and we needed to know the type of population we were dealing with. Was it a citizen population or a transient population?...All of those things had to be addressed. We actually found that the mechanism to gather that information was not there, so we had to evaluate the information, place information in a form so that we could identify what was the major problem and then make recommendations to address those concerns.

SENTINEL-VOICE: What type of support did you receive from parents, businesspersons, educators and others when the actual

work started on the plan?

RAMADAN: To mention briefly the public hearings, there were commission



Nevada Substance Abuse Coordinator Mujahid Ramadan

hearings and public hearings. We held commission hearings in Las

Vegas. We held commission and public hearings in Lake Tahoe, Reno, Elko, Nevada and Tonopah. In hiding

able to gather information from other areas. I think that by-and-large, the general public's response was more-

forcement is one of the main components to the "war on drugs," we can't leave the "war on drugs" to law enforcement." Law enforcement generally deals with the symptoms. The problem is usually out-of-hand when it becomes a "law enforcement problem." There needs to be an increase in "education prevention" and secondary would be "treatment." So education prevention in most strategies throughout the United States were the "high priorities." There was a survey taken in New York and "education prevention" was the highest in the survey listings as to what taxpayers were willing to spend their money on. "Treatment" came in second and "law enforcement" came in third. Now, that was in New York.

the hearings we had to hear the concerns of the general population, of citizens, of children, and the public about substance abuse, be it legal or illegal, in their communities, the magnitude of the problem and what the federal and state government could do to reduce the problem of substance abuse.

So the public hearings were to get the citizens' response...By and large, I think in particular for a first-time effort, the first time embarking on this from a state level, I think it was fairly successful, a good response from the citizens themselves. There were areas that we would like to improve upon. We noticed that even in the second hearing that we held here in southern Nevada, the first hearing that we held on gangs - you were there - we had a better turnout than we had at the previous one. I think that there should be a greater participation by certain ethnic groups based on the magnitude of the problem, in terms of the public hearings, that didn't happen. However, we were

than-adequate. It gave us an opportunity to gather information and then to develop strategies to address those problems.

SENTINEL-VOICE: Did your office go out of state to look at other strategies and to what extent did your office go in comparing strategies with other states?

RAMADAN: ...I think that in terms of "comparing strategies" that ours is one of the most "comprehensive strategies." It's streamlined, it's well focused, it's not "fatty" and it goes right to "the heart" of the problem. It says that there is a lot of "hard problems" and that there is not a lot of "easy solutions" to them...I reviewed some thirty-seven strategies from different states and we actually read about thirteen of the thirty-seven word-by-word and line-by-line and discipline-by-discipline. We reviewed what was the problem and how they were addressing it. We found that by-and-large that all of the strategies focused on "law enforcement." While law en-

In other states such as California, for example, they developed the "California Report on Self Esteem." Again, "education and prevention," focusing on how to build healthy human beings, identifying the fact that healthy human beings don't usually have drug problems, which are really symptoms of another problem. Illinois strategy focused on "building healthy humans" and "building healthy families;" you do that by "education and prevention." Therefore, by building healthy families and healthy citizens, healthy communities, by producing healthy parents, by helping parents become better parents, it gives law enforcement a better opportunity to deal with the "hard-core" 15% that are a danger to our society.

SENTINEL-VOICE: Would you give our SENTINEL-VOICE readers some of the highlights of the anti-drug strategy report?

RAMADAN: My office and the Commission termed the report "Nevada's Drug Problem: Hard Facts, No Easy Answers"....One of the findings is that 1 in every 400,000 Nevadans have used illegal drugs. Ninety thousand (90,000) Nevadans have used alcohol or are alcoholics. Two-hundred and ninety-six million dollars (\$296,000,000) is lost each year by Nevada's industry due to alcohol and drugs. Nevada spent over six hundred-and-twenty million dollars (\$620,000,000) on prisons in the last decade compared to five-hundred and forty million dollars

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