

Recall effort falls far short

By John T. Stephens III
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Citizens For Honest and Responsible Government's bid to recall Clark County Commission Chairwoman Yvonne Atkinson Gates failed last week as Secretary of State Dean Heller threw out numerous petitions citing voting irregularities.

The Clark County Election Department conducted a random verification of 500 signatures of the 7,474 signatures collected by the group.

The recall only required the collection of 4,380 signatures to push the election department to recall Gates.

Approximately 266 signatures were ruled invalid. National Voter Outreach out of Carson City was hired to gather the signatures.

"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you," Atkinson Gates said to her supporters last week. "I'm delighted. It has been a very trying and humbling time for me in my career."

Charles Bennion, president and organizer for citizens' group, was unavailable for comment.

"He (Heller) took the word of the registrar's office without conducting an intensive study of the petition," said Tiffany Bennion, Charles' wife. She said her husband wants Heller to order the election department to validate each signature on the petition with someone from his group present.

"I truly believe they are wasting taxpayers

money," Atkinson Gates said of the continued effort to force her into a special "yes, no" recall election. She said a recall election would cost the county more than \$100,000. But, she said, "I can respect a person's right to do what they think is right."

Critics of the recall effort question the group's motive, saying its members are nothing more than pawns of casino boss Sheldon Adelson, a chief financier of the recall push.

"I question their honesty," Atkinson Gates said of the group's members. "It is unfortunate to have people working as detractors instead of making this community a better place for all of us."

"We have no personal vendetta against Gates," said Tiffany Bennion, adding that she thinks the group is misunderstood. "We just can't close our eyes to the fact that everybody does it."

The Bennions and others are upset with Atkinson Gates' character. The commissioner has been cited for violating two ethics laws and faces an ethics investigation into awarding airport concessions to friends.

Republican Terry Akers, a chiropractor, wants Atkinson Gates' District D seat.

"My plans for District D are to focus on economics, education, redevelopment, and prevention for kids at risk," Akers said.

Atkinson Gates questions Akers' commitment to District D.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Geildne Gallagher, center, joined others at the West Las Vegas Library supporting the embattled commissioner.

Ministers

(Continued from Page 1)

Earlier last week, Citizens For Honest And Responsible Government, failed in its effort to force Atkinson Gates into a special recall election. Secretary of State Dean Heller cited several problems including the fact that some of the signatures belonged to people outside the commissioner's District D and some weren't registered voters.

Chiropractor Terry Akers

backed the recall effort and has said he plans to oppose the commissioner in any election. He moved into District D in January.

"If the people of District D have called Gates to represent them then I don't feel that another district has the right to recall her," Jacobs said. "That's not the proper way to do things."

The ministers contend Sheldon Adelson, president

and CEO of the yet-to-open Venetian, financed most of the recall efforts and offered voters free meals and money to sign the recall petition.

Geildne Gallagher, a minister of music for Second Baptist Church and music instructor for the West Las Vegas Arts Center, complained to the ministers about receiving a recorded message on her phone asking her if she would vote against Gates.

"These people are simply immoral," Davis said. "They have used lies, trickery, subterfuge and just about any means necessary to manipulate the system."

The Ministers Alliance represents 52 churches, has about a 100 members and represents more than 1,000 parishioners. They challenged Adelson to show his support to District D by hiring many African-Americans to work in the Venetian.

That should be his focus instead of promoting mischief and mayhem," Davis said.

Ethics task force seeks input

By Deborah Kohen
Sentinel-Voice

More than a year ago, the county approved a task force to establish ethics guidelines for elected and appointed officials.

Operational for some months, the task force is now seeking public input into recommendations it has been writing for the last three months. A special meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 26 at the Clark County Government Center, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway, in the Pueblo Room on the first floor.

Tentative recommendations can be reviewed at more than 80 locations throughout the Las Vegas valley, including community centers, libraries, government buildings and grocery stores. The draft document may also be accessed through the county's Web site, www.co.clark.nv.us, under the "news flashes" link.

Final recommendations will be presented to the state's Ethics Commission for review. The Clark County Commission has the final word on which suggestions to implement.

The task force aims to eliminate the "gray areas," which often cause the most angst. Simplifying the guidelines, it's theorized, will make clear what constitutes an ethics breach and save elected and appointed officials from unwarranted harassment.

Comprised of representatives from the media, civic

and religious organizations, former elected officials, the county commission and the university system, the task force drew up proposals covering "disclosure, abstention and conflict of interest."

Disclosure and abstention fall under conflict of interest umbrella. Disclosure involves officials revealing relationships with people directly affected by rulings they make. If a conflict of interest exists,

the official must refrain from participating in the vote; this is abstention.

The task force does not address specific cases or any individual officials. Comments at the special meeting will be limited to general issues.

Task force chairman Larry Spitzer hopes to have a strong citizen turnout.

"We look forward to other comments from the public," he said.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

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