

## OUR VIEW

## Champ Needed For Education

Maybe it's a good thing that Gov. Kenny Guinn has 14 more months in office. If you haven't heard, state university system chancellor Jim Rogers recently floated Guinn's name as the "superstar" recruit he says the Clark County School District needs to turn around the nation's sixth-largest school system. CCSD has been without a superintendent since former chief Carlos Garcia became vice president of urban markets for McGraw-Hill, the company the school district buys textbooks from. Two interim superintendents have run things post Garcia.

By no means should Guinn, a former CCSD superintendent, be viewed as a savior. The thinking goes that since Guinn held the job before and since he's served in the highest office in the state that he can certainly be superintendent. Which is a fine theory. But theory and practice are two different birds. Barring some amazing turn of fortune, Guinn's eight-year gubernatorial reign will go down as one of the most nondescript in state history. Under his rule, the state had its largest ever tax increase and only modestly improved in vital quality-of-life areas. He also championed the Millennium Scholarship program—a.k.a., Project Build A Legacy—as a way to increase the number of students going to college.

Bad enough that this trickle-down educational approach has produced mediocre results—significant amounts of Millennium Scholars have to take remedial college classes. Worse than that, the scholarship program eats up 40 percent of the billions in tobacco settlement money Nevada is receiving over the next 25 years. Guess how much money is going to tobacco cessation and education programs? If you guessed 10 percent—a piddling amount given that Nevada is among the smokiest states in the nation—go out and light up, or don't.

Besides, Guinn served as superintendent from 1969 to 1978. Might as well have been 200 B.C. The district wasn't as big as it is now, as ethnically diverse, or as challenged. The next superintendent has to face, among other things, growing concern about the safety of children. In the past four years, nearly 20 district employees have been arrested and charged with sex-related offenses. Seven years ago, Nevada was among 21 states to ratify the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which created the Interstate Identification System, a database to share criminal records (arrests for felonies and serious misdemeanors; convictions, pleas and acquittals) for non-criminal justice purposes. It hasn't been enough.

One suggestion would be to follow the lead of schools in Orange County, Calif. According to the *Orange County Register*, districts there have supplemented sexual harassment training with "lessons on how to spot – and report – a potential abuser before it's too late." At Orange Unified, the district hired "a consultant to provide two hours of training for administrators on child sexual-abuse prevention. They, in turn, trained their staffs in the spring," while the "Diocese of Orange requires new teachers to attend a full day of training and created a DVD for high schools. The materials for OUSD and the diocese explain how abusers 'groom' students."

Protecting students is just the tip of the iceberg. You have to teach them, too. Half of the state's public schools failed to meet performance demands set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The next CCSD chief will need the gumption to be bold and look at all avenues for improving education.

Of course, the quality of what's taught in the classrooms largely hinges on teachers. Forget all the numerology surrounding teacher's pay in Nevada, the bottom line is they are underpaid. They're rapidly—if not already—being priced out of homeownership in Clark County. As if you need more proof that Guinn isn't education's saviour, consider that the \$300 million taxpayer rebate (Project Build A Legacy, Part II) could have turbocharged teacher salaries, enabling Nevada to draw the best and brightest.

What the CCSD needs is a champ not a figurehead.



## Court pick sparks supreme angst

By Dora LaGrande  
*Sentinel-Voice*

President Bush has nominated Judge Samuel A. Alito Jr. to be the next Supreme Court Justice. Before the nomination was made, public sparks began to fly. Liberals were mobilizing, conservatives were applauding, and the stage is being set for a revolution on the Supreme Court.

Now the Senate will have a chance to show what they are really made of, Republicans and Democrats alike. Judge William Rehnquist stated in 1959 that the Senate's job is to inform itself thoroughly on the judicial philosophy of a Supreme Court nominee before voting to confirm him. It is important to recognize the proper role of the Senate in the confirmation process.

Several scholars and political pundits have suggested that the Senate may not consider or improperly question a nominee about his or her judicial philosophy. This suggestion is wrong. While it is not appropriate to ask a nominee to prejudge a hypothetical case, it is entirely proper to elicit his or her views on fundamental legal principles and significant legal issues. When the President picks a nominee because of his or her views, the Senate must not be required to rubber stamp the nomination without considering them. Such consideration is an essential part of the Senate's constitutionally-prescribed, co-equal role in the judicial



### ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

selection process.

The President nominates an individual for a position of this kind, and the Senate has the responsibility of probing into his or her character, integrity and philosophy to determine whether or not the person is a properly qualified. With these facts in mind, let's look at Bush's appointment and the impact Alito will have on the Supreme Court if confirmed.

First of all, we must acknowledge that no matter who was chosen there were going to be some unhappy people because everyone's views and philosophies are different.

If confirmed, Alito's judicial views and philosophies will have major impact. Even a small change in the composition of the Supreme Court can have a dramatic effect on our rights, freedoms and legal safeguards. But Bush, who at this point in his term is getting the lowest ratings of his career from both Democrats and Republicans, has the opportunity with the appointments of Roberts and Alito to shift the country's legal landscape dramatically. The court has currently been evenly divided between left and right but is now being tilted in a conservative direction.

There have been 34 cases resolved by a 5-4 margin that highlight some of the key issues that now narrowly divide the court. The cases deal with critical issues which include voting rights, civil rights, states rights, reproductive freedom, church-state separation, environmental protection, criminal justice, gay rights and even the scope of presidential power.

Bush's two appointments will most assuredly move the Supreme Court to the far right. In instances where Sandra Day O'Connor, the swing vote on the Supreme Court, swung left, Alito will likely swing right.

The burning issue which everyone seems to be jumping up and down about is a 1991 case in which Alito

joined two other judges in upholding various abortion regulations the Pennsylvania legislature had adopted. But he was the only member of the panel who thought the law requiring that married women notify their husbands before having an abortion was not an "undue burden" as O'Connor had defined the concept.

In closing, no nominee should be confirmed or denied based on one issue. A "Good Morning America" poll this week showed that 72 percent of Americans believe that a woman should notify her husband before she has an abortion. In Alito's ruling he never called for the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* nor did he speak negatively of it. He did acknowledge that the spousal notification law made exception for cases of spousal abuse and stated that provision would be okay in his opinion and indicated he agreed wholeheartedly.

I haven't decided yet if I am for or against this nomination.  
(See LaGrande, Page 9)

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