

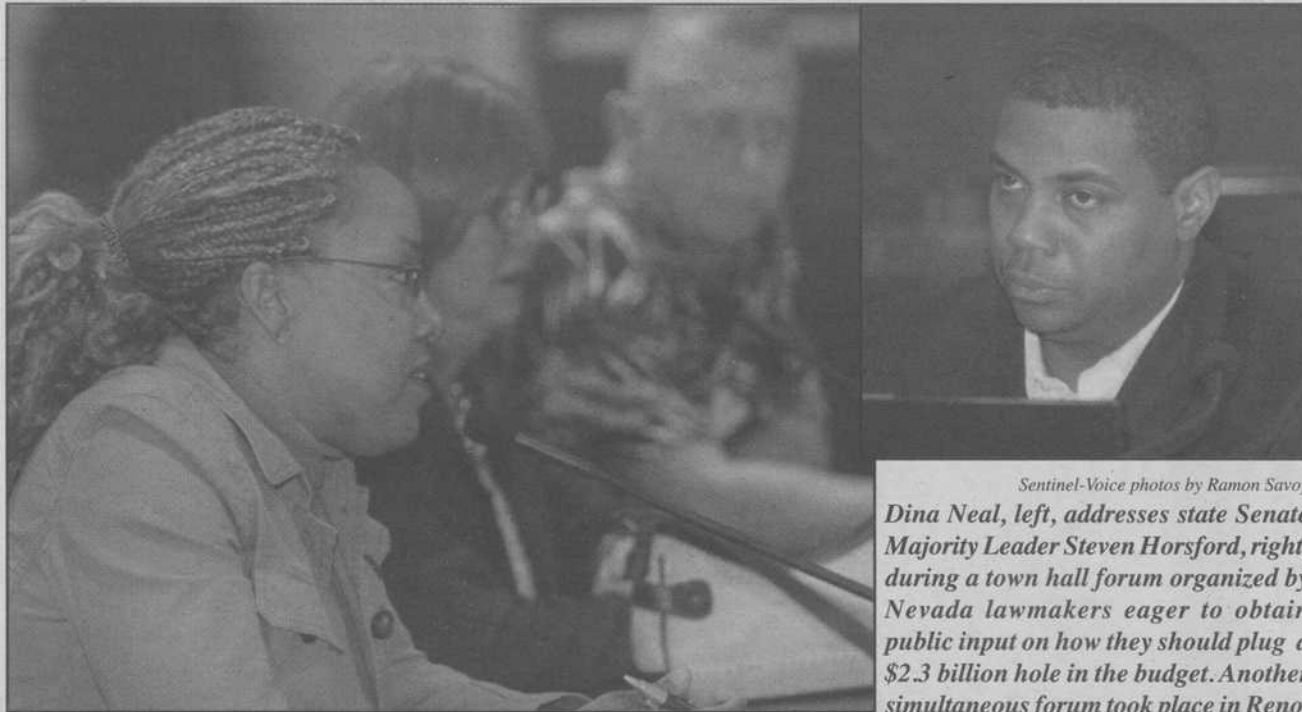
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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



Sentinel-Voice photos by Ramon Savoy
Dina Neal, left, addresses state Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, right, during a town hall forum organized by Nevada lawmakers eager to obtain public input on how they should plug a \$2.3 billion hole in the budget. Another simultaneous forum took place in Reno.

Public decries budget cuts

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Alarmed by Gov. Jim Gibbons' proposed 36 percent cut to the state budget — a move meant to shore up Nevada's \$2.3 billion deficit — hundreds voiced opposition in separate town hall meetings at opposite ends of the state.

More than 200 packed the fourth floor of the Sawyer Building in Las Vegas on Saturday, joining throngs of residents at a similar meeting in Northern Nevada, to castigate Gibbons budget for the 2009-11 biennium as shortsighted and inefficient. So charged was the atmosphere

at the local meeting that it went an hour past its 9 a.m.-to-noon schedule.

Deep cuts in education and healthcare concerned most. Participants fear six percent cuts in teachers' pay, as proposed by Gibbons, could cause an exodus from education, thus compromising the quality of what's taught in classrooms. Others are worried about how the loss of Medicaid benefits will affect ill patients and whether doctors will accept new clients despite big reductions in Medicaid reimbursements. Sandra Curry, a grandmother with a 12-year-old grandson suffering from cerebral palsy,

said she's having trouble getting medical assistance for him after he recently broke his arm.

"I was told that most doctors would not accept new cases or new injuries from existing patients because Medicaid would not honor the reimbursement costs. If I want medical assistance for my grandson, then I would need to travel to California to seek such aid."

Other individuals said cuts in education and childcare most worried them. Loretta Harper, a counselor at Desert Pines High School, fears cuts in teachers' salaries could have a trickle-down

effect: fewer students pass the state's proficiency test, thus meaning fewer can attend college. "Please don't cut teachers salaries in education. We are underpaid and overworked. When we suffer, it has a direct effect upon the students that we teach everyday."

"One of our clients recently has had to withdraw her son from childcare because she no longer can afford to send him here while she's attending nursing classes," added Connie Harris of Kids Turf Academy. "She was attending classes over 18 months and now

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Simpson friend seeking justice

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Claiming O.J. Simpson was dealt an injustice, the brother of the football star's former girlfriend is soliciting money to appeal Simpson's conviction and prison sentence on kidnapping and armed robbery charges.

Barrett Prody, 35, has created a nonprofit corporation and a website, the Society Against Legal Injustice Inc., to raise money for Simpson.

"I hope to help out someone who has gotten to be a good friend," Prody said by telephone from his home in Fargo, N.D. "I want to leverage his name in an effort to right an injustice out there in Las Vegas."

But Simpson lawyers Yale Galanter in Miami and Gabriel Grasso in Las Vegas said they don't think the fund is needed. Galanter said Simpson's trial fees and costs were fully paid and his appellate fees and costs were "basically paid." He declined to provide amounts, citing attorney-client confidentiality.

"It seems that Barrett has the best of intentions," Galanter said. "But whatever he's doing is on a separate track with what we're doing."

The lawyers said they expected to file an appeal in the next six weeks with the Nevada Supreme Court over Simpson's conviction for the armed robbery and kidnapping of two sports memorabilia dealers in a Las Vegas casino hotel room.

Simpson's daughter, Arnelle Simpson, and a Simpson friend, Tom Scotto, said they support Prody's effort and that they expected any money Prody raises would help pay the 61-year-old former football star and television actor's legal bills.

"It's legit," Arnelle Simpson said. "It was established and created for my dad. Of course I approve of it and will support it."

Scotto said he also agreed to be a board member of the Society Against Legal Injustice.

Prody's younger sister, Christine Prody, was Simpson's girlfriend for more than a decade after the NFL Hall of Famer was acquitted in the 1994 slaying of his

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Chamber helps businesses survive economy

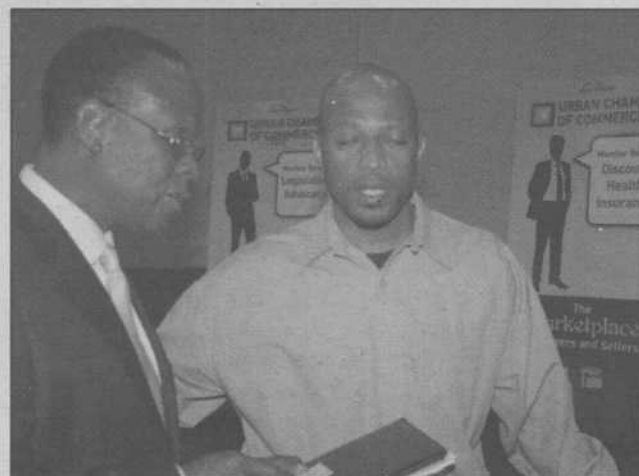
By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

More than 50 members of the Urban Chamber of Commerce met recently to discuss how member businesses are surviving in these tough economic times. The meeting at the Culinary Training Academy, was part of its quarterly business roundtable. Titled "Save Ourselves Now, We Don't Have 18 Months," the forum focused on a key question: What are you doing to bring business in?

The answers ran the gamut. Extending contracts and renegotiating terms. Ad-

vertising more and enhancing marketing and public relations' efforts. Fulfilling core needs. Engaging in confidence-building moves. Reasserting your company's value as a business partner. Aggressively pursuing new revenue sources. Diversifying products and services. Becoming an industry advocate, especially at the legislative level.

Just hearing what other businesspeople are doing inspired Robert Newell of Merrill Lynch to work even harder for his clients. "When we work together to maintain



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy
Terry Williams, left, Eric James participated in a roundtable sponsored by the Urban Chamber of Commerce. The forum focused on businesses surviving the economic downturn.

our businesses and stay afloat, we're going to make it in the long run."

Urban Chamber president Cornelius Eason, moderated the forum. He said the goal was to facilitate a peer-to-peer discussion about the challenges and opportunities in today's fragile economy.

"Because the world is changing, we are having this dialog among our members to support one another and share some valuable insights learned during this experience," he said. "We want to capture some points of interest by the membership, such

as hosting the Small Business Administration (SBA) and what they are doing to free up loans for small businesses and hosting a future workshop addressing that issue."

The forum also touched on members' approaches to surviving the downturn and thriving once the economy rebounds. Answers included tweaking business plans, becoming better salespeople, restructuring fees, projecting calm, continuing to spend money and accessing additional lending sources.

Terry Williams, president
(See Chamber, Page 3)