

Tax group impacts legislative session

By Chuck Otto
SPECIAL TO THE BONANZA

I am a snowbird – leave in the winter and return in the summer. It is amazing what a small group of dedicated year-round residents can do during that period to protect all of us. During the recently-ended legislative session, much was done to ensure that equity and fairness prevail in the property tax process.

Led by the Village League to Save Incline Assets and assisted by numerous property owners who attended meetings, hearings and sent e-mails, several bills were passed that protect property owners from subjective and illegal taxation methods and practices. Additionally, several bills were defeated by their efforts that would have been threatening and unfair to taxpayers.

Of course, the most notable activity was the passage of the 3 percent tax cap for the next two years. Hundreds of hours were spent on this activity to ensure the fairest and most equitable solution was adopted. This success has been adequately covered, but some of the lesser publicized, but just as important bills that were passed, deserve to be mentioned.

Bill **AB392** was proposed by the Village League and personally sponsored by Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick. He was a major supporter of the efforts of the Village League to

get these bills through the process and signed by the governor. This bill requires that the Nevada Tax Commission adopt all regulations, including standards, before they can be used in the assessment of property. Previously, the assessors had the right to adopt their own standards which led to wide disparity in taxes between counties. Now there will be uniformity among all of the counties' assessment methods. **This bill received the highest favorable rating of any of the 1,000 - plus bills submitted due to the enormous response by our residents who voted on the legislative Web site.**

Bill **SB486** - The efforts of the league and its supporters, who once again used the Web site voting page to make their desires known, **got this bill defeated.** It would have made personal property (stocks, bonds, and bank accounts) available to assessors as additional collateral for the purposes of property taxation. Proposed by The Nevada Assessor's Association, this bill got the highest unfavorable rating as there was a huge outcry from property owners.

Bill **SB395** – Opponents of this bill, including the Village League, called this the "**Gestapo Bill.**" Their efforts defeated the onerous portions of the bill which would have enabled the assessor to subpoena a property owner's financial and legal documents if the owner

disagreed with the proposed assessment and then to assess the property at whatever he thought and the taxpayer would have no right to appeal. **We were successful in getting this section and other oppressive portions amended out of this bill** that was also proposed by the Nevada Assessor's Association.

Bill **AB128** - **Was supported by the Village League and passed.** This bill requires the Department of Taxation and the County Assessors to provide a description of the assessment process, an explanation of how property taxes are calculated and expands the information that must be provided to the taxpayer without charge.

Bill **SB590** redefined a "**primary residence**" to include a Nevada home even if the owner also had homes in other states; thereby qualifying the taxpayer to benefit from the 3 percent tax cap.

Getting a bill through the legislature is a time-consuming and tedious process. Through the persistence of the Village League and its supporters and the leadership of Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick, these bills will provide better protection, equity and fairness to the Incline Village and Crystal Bay property owners.

Chuck Otto is an Incline resident and member of the Village League.