

From: [NV Deaf Commission](#)
To: [Lorraine Belt](#)
Subject: FW: Concerning the Committee of Senior Citizens, Veterans, and Adults with Special Needs Meeting on April 30, 2024.
Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 2:37:08 PM

Please Add to Meeting Materials for May 8th, 2024 General Commission Meeting Per Commission Chair's Request.

Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 9:46 PM

To: Pat.Spearman@sen.state.nv.us; Marilyn.DonderoLoop@sen.state.nv.us;
Lisa.Krasner@sen.state.nv.us; Reuben.DSilva@asm.state.nv.us; Ken.Gray@asm.state.nv.us;
Tracy.BrownMay@asm.state.nv.us

Cc: Nicole.Cannizzaro@sen.state.nv.us; NV Deaf Commission <NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov>

Subject: Concerning the Committee of Senior Citizens, Veterans, and Adults with Special Needs Meeting on April 30, 2024.

Dear Senators, Assemblypersons, and Legislative Committee Members of the Committee of Senior Citizens, Veterans, and Adults with Special Needs:

I recently attended your meeting on April 30, 2024 in room 4401. After sitting through multiple reports from different community representatives in and from the State, it is clear we have a lot of issues being reported from the Aging, Deaf, and Disabilities communities.

I was hopeful coming in that I would find you all receptive and caring about your constituents, and empathetic to the deficits and lack of resources here in Nevada. I was surprised to find that you as the representatives for these communities were unwilling to hear that the State was anything but perfect. Being informed of the plight of individuals who are Deaf/HH, Blind, or who have developmental or other disabilities are expected to make due with what they have, or share their very limited resources to help each other, was astounding.

This is a ridiculous notion that you all are powerless to effect change in any meaningful way and that those with less connections or resources should figure it out amongst themselves. The Developmental Disabilities Council does not have a budget large enough to cover its own service needs throughout the State, let alone those of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, along with the visually impaired community.

To take offense and chastise the people who are doing the work every day is a slap in the face of your constituents. Reprimanding Catherine Nielsen for speaking up for those she represents and the Deaf community is appalling. She used their words and

not her own, reporting from the surveys and data that has been collected. She was invited to report and so she did.

When Obioma Officer and Shelly Freed presented you all listened, but didn't hear. And as I later watched the video recording it was clear that your office is completely detached from what it means to provide equitable access. The entire time two women from the Deaf community are presenting they are off camera and only their PowerPoint slides can be seen. This disregards the Deaf community and makes them depend on transcripts of what the interpreter spoke, which from being in the audience and hearing them and knowing what was communicated in sign, I can tell you the interpreters did not use the correct words, they stumbled over their words, and they missed communicating key information. This means the Deaf community will have inaccurate information and your records will also be inaccurate. This is absolutely ludicrous that the representatives for those who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing cannot even be allowed to speak for themselves directly to the community in their preferred language. And they informed your tech team about the needs. Completely unacceptable.

Eric Wilcox spoke to how those who have the power to make decisions, those at the top, lack knowledge and competency, and he spoke accurately. For Senator Loop to recommend that the DD council provide money for interpreters, read up on your meetings and contact your office to see if you need interpreters is a concept completely out of touch with ADA laws and the basic provisions that are required. Your lack of knowledge about your constituents and the things you are required by law to provide is evident.

Every student is required to have access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Saying that a bill for a Deaf school didn't make it through is a poor excuse for not meeting the needs of the children in your State. The State is required to provide this, not excuses for why it isn't happening. Senator Marilyn Dandero Loop, you said that you do not have the knowledge or competency to understand what the Deaf, Blind, or Developmental Disabilities communities need. If you cannot effect change, then vacate your seat so someone with the knowledge and competency can fill it and execute the duties of that role effectively.

Assemblywoman Tracy Brown-May, you were largely quiet throughout the proceeding except to level thinly veiled threats at Catherine Nielsen. Are you not interested in the struggles and challenges facing your constituents? Why are you on this committee if you cannot be bothered to listen, but only offer excuses? Vacate your seat and allow someone with the passion and desire to make change to have the opportunity to make a difference.

Senator Pat Spearman, I appreciate your efforts over the years to make change. Your sponsoring of the bill for a Deaf school, and sponsoring the bill for the Commission for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Speech Impaired is appreciated. However, you cut off Ms. Nielsen before she could offer her final notes because you and your colleagues were offended at being told you could be doing better. You also

veered off course during the presentation from the Commission for persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing talking about voting which was not one of the noted themes of the report. Voting access is a topic, but it was one that served you and not the purpose of the presentation to inform you of what your constituents are saying.

I have sat through many town halls and heard the Deaf community tear into the leaders present, and these leaders are working every day to make change. It's hard to hear criticism. It takes a certain type of person to take that and keep going. Maybe you did that before, but you are having a hard time of it now. And that's ok. You served and we are grateful. But if this work is wearing on you, be brave enough to say so and let others pick up and continue on.

It is imperative that those who represent us actually represent us. There should be people on the committee who have lived experience in the realms in which they make decisions. It seems being unaffected by anything but that which happens to us all, aging, you all are unconcerned with the plight of your constituents, and that is concerning. You wrapped up the meeting with saying that these two presentations, those being on aging and dementia, are the two you and your colleagues should focus on. This completely ignored the requests from those representing the blind, Deaf and hard of hearing, and those with developmental disabilities.

Your constituents deserve better.