

# Committee on Resources

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## **Written Testimony by Antoinette Cavanaugh, Superintendent of Schools Elko County School District October 21, 2004**

### Sustainable Development Opportunities in Mining Communities

Elko County consists of over 17,000 square miles and, as of 2003, has been home to seven major mines that produce gold, silver, barite, limestone, quicklime and hydrated lime.

Elko County School District serves nearly 10,000 students throughout the district and is, without a doubt, impacted by the ebb and flow of the mining industry. Boom or bust, the school district must stand ready to react to increases in enrollment when mineral prices escalate and, conversely, must be ready to adjust to decreases in enrollment when mineral values decline or when mines close.

During periods of a fortified mining economy, the school district must pay heed to the development of strong infrastructures that support our educational programs that serve increases in student population. We must quickly build instructional classrooms to accommodate our student populations. Fortunately, in Elko County, we have a Pay-As-You-Go Capital Improvement Fund that allows for our district to react to increases in student populations. As many lawmakers know, floating a bond for school renovation and construction is tricky business at best, and quite often, is not a measure tax payers look kindly upon as a way to fund building construction in an effort to accommodate student growth.

During a weak mining economy the school district is rocked by lack of revenue and reductions in student enrollment. Budget cuts become necessary to ensure the maintenance of critical instructional programming. With the requirements of NCLB careful consideration must be made to ensure essential programming for subgroup populations. Quite often Reduction in Force measures must be taken to ensure that the district maintains a balanced budget. A failing mining economy has many devastating effects on school business and the aforementioned are just a few examples of what takes place in a recessionary economy.

Essential to curbing the boom and bust cycle of mining is the development of a sustainable diversified economy in Nevada communities. It is necessary to develop commercial or industrial opportunities throughout Nevada that hold promise in stabilizing our rural communities. While schools depend upon Net Proceeds of Mines to boost local wealth, increasing the Ad Valorem values by utilizing mining properties for expanded use through other industrial ventures, ultimately, local support for funding Nevada's schools are enhanced.