

Politics 101

For more than twenty years, the Nevada Restaurant Association and its President, Van Heffner, has served as a representative of the restaurant industry in Nevada. Over the past several years, I have personally become increasingly aware of the importance of politics to the typical restaurant and its suppliers. In fact, I believe that the 2003 Legislative Session has forced us all to become more educated and involved in Nevada politics. What once was a distant thought (or even a distraction) is now in our faces and, more importantly, in our cash registers.

Not entirely uncharacteristically, I have waded into the fray. Actually, “waded” does not do enough justice – I have jumped into Nevada politics head first, and now find myself up to my ankles in facts, fantasy and figures. That’s right, folks. I have declared my candidacy for Nevada State Assembly District 4.

So, for the past five months, I have met with Republicans and Democrats, Lobbyists, Politicians, Organizations and just about anyone willing to meet me to discuss their concerns. My candidacy has been a crash course in Nevada politics. I have learned more about Nevada in the past five months than I have in the nineteen years I have been a resident. Unfortunately, not everything I am taught can be taken at face value. For instance, I have been taught that:

- ALL of the 15 Republican Assembly “holdouts” that voted against the 2003 tax increases voted for the spending increases;
- NONE of the 15 Republican Assembly “holdouts” that voted against the 2003 tax increases voted for the spending increases;
- Water levels are a major concern and we must act now to fix the situation;
- There is no “water shortage” and we are approaching the end of the seven-year drought which will be followed by a refilling of Lake Mead.

This is just a brief glimpse of what is being “taught” by existing politicians, interest groups and educated individuals. Note that I provide you with what I have been taught, not what I have learned. What I have learned is that I should be skeptical of what is being taught. I should listen intently and seek to glean the true story from the facts I gather. I have learned that those I have trusted may not be worthy of that trust and those I hardly know may actually be more loyal. I have learned that Nevada politics is, in general, less about Nevada and more about politics.

So why should we in the restaurant industry give a damn? Why should we care that one of our own is seeking to join the Legislature? Why should we care that the Nevada Restaurant Association is active in Nevada politics?

To answer these questions, I provide you with past our pending issues that directly impact the restaurant industry:

- Initiative to increase minimum wage levels;
- Initiative to ban smoking in restaurants and taverns and place regulatory authority at local levels;
- Regulation of Workers’ Compensation Insurance and Self-Insured Groups;

- Increase in taxes on Nevada businesses;
- Increase in liquor taxes;
- Increase in licensing fees for businesses;
- Rising costs of health insurance and mandates for employers to provide coverage.

And this is the short list! The restaurant industry is best served by a person from the industry – such as myself – that understands our specific needs. So how can you help me, the Association, and the industry? For starters, please consider moving your personal residence to the Northwest part of the valley. If I can convince just two thousand Nevadans to move near me, I can ensure a victory in the September 7 primary. If you do not wish to move, there are many ways you may help my race, such as contributing to my campaign. Contact and race information is available on my website at www.justin4nevada.com