



# LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2013



SAM MORRIS

Assemblyman John Hambrick gives a tour of the “bad-boy office” on the first day of the 2013 legislative session Monday in Carson City. It’s a quick tour.

THE LEGISLATURE

## Lobbyists often discuss public policy in private

By DAVID McGRATH SCHWARTZ  
A version of this story was posted on lasvegassun.com at 2 a.m. Thursday.

CARSON CITY — Do the bulk of the Nevada Legislature’s decisions happen in public committee meetings or on the legislative floor? Or do they happen in back rooms closed to the public and sometimes other lawmakers?

If you have to ask those questions, you haven’t been to Carson City.

Elected leaders, though, apparently don’t like it thrown in their faces. Some Democratic senators appeared to take umbrage as a gaggle of business lobbyists met Wednesday in the Senate’s largest hearing room — no press, public or elected officials allowed.

Sen. Mo Denis, D-Las Vegas, after he asked, was allowed inside to address the Business Lobbyist

Group. (To be clear, no one is sure if the title should be capitalized.) And one source said Denis told them he expected an update on the group’s deliberations, which could be key in the developing tax debate.

Here’s how it went down and why it sheds light on one hard-to-report aspect of closed-door negotiations on legislative policy, such as the margins tax.

After Nevada journalist Jon Ralston tweeted about the meeting Wednesday morning, Senate Democratic leaders, about to head into a floor session, peered into the room, bewildered and more than a bit peeved. Some of these lobbyists, after all, are the people who sometimes try to kill policies put forward by Democratic leaders, gathering together right under lawmakers’ noses to plot strategy.

The Senate sergeant-at-arms  
[See Legislature, Page 4]

IMMIGRATION

## Union leaders on board with push for reform

By TOVIN LAPAN  
A version of this story was posted on lasvegassun.com at 2 a.m. Thursday.

When President Barack Obama came to Las Vegas last week to push for reform of the immigration system, several leaders from the largest unions in the country were in attendance, including those that helped scuttle immigration reform efforts in 2007.

After the 25-minute speech in which Obama outlined four key principles of his plan, organizations from every side of the issue released statements.

“President Obama’s plan offers nothing to American workers except the certainty of even greater competition for scarce jobs and further suppression of their wages,” Dan Stein, president of the Federation of American Immigration Reform, a restric-



STEVE MARCUS

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka speaks Jan. 29 after a gathering of union leaders.

tionist group that advocates for border security and strict limits on immigrants, said in a release.

Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO president, joined several other union representatives at a rally after the speech supporting immigration reform.

“We are going to do a whole national campaign for comprehensive immigration reform, because the current system is  
[See Immigration reform, Page 5]

THE LEGISLATURE

## IS HIS OFFICE A GOOD FIT?

Republican who unseated speaker-elect assigned ‘bad-boy office’

By DAVID McGRATH SCHWARTZ

A version of this story was posted on lasvegassun.com at 2 a.m. Wednesday.

Carson City

You can tell a lawmaker’s standing by his or her office — not the political one but the physical one, where committee binders rest between meetings and a legislator can get an ounce of privacy.

¶ The important lawmakers — those in leadership or who are committee chairmen — get the corner office space and maybe even a small conference room. ¶ For Assemblyman John Hambrick, R-Las Vegas, it’s room 3116, dubbed informally the “bad-boy office.” It’s the smallest office in the building, and it’s right next to a bathroom. ¶ With Democrats in control of the Legislature, the “bad-boy office” — also known as the “dog house” — is traditionally used as a sort of punishment to those Republicans on the outs with leadership. ¶ It’s a tight squeeze, but Hambrick graciously invited a Sun reporter in for a short interview. His joviality, however, seemed a bit forced. ¶ “This is the north wing,” he said, sweeping his arm in a mock of the lack of grandeur. “And here’s the south wing.” ¶ There’s a window — which not every office has. But the view in the foreground is a black gravelly roof. In the distance are snow-capped mountains, which is nice.

[See Small office, Page 4]

### THE SUN’S MOST READ STORIES

These were among the most-read stories on lasvegassun.com as of 12:30 p.m. Thursday.

- 1 Proposed law would require drug tests to receive welfare.** The lawmaker who introduced the bill says that if people can afford drugs, they don’t need assistance.
- 2 Blog: Rebels drop to 4-4 in the league with second straight loss, 64-55 at Fresno State.**
- 3 Democrats banish Assemblyman Brooks from caucus.**
- 4 Rebels have only simple explanations for complex loss at Fresno State.** The team says players missed open looks while the Bulldogs hit timely shots.
- 5 Jewelry theft captured on video; thief captured by working reporter.** A reporter for the Univision affiliate in Las Vegas, KINC, was accosted by a man who stole a necklace right off his neck and fled.



lasvegassun.com/weather

Today  
High: 55, Low: 45

Saturday  
High: 54, Low: 39

Sunday  
High: 54, Low: 37

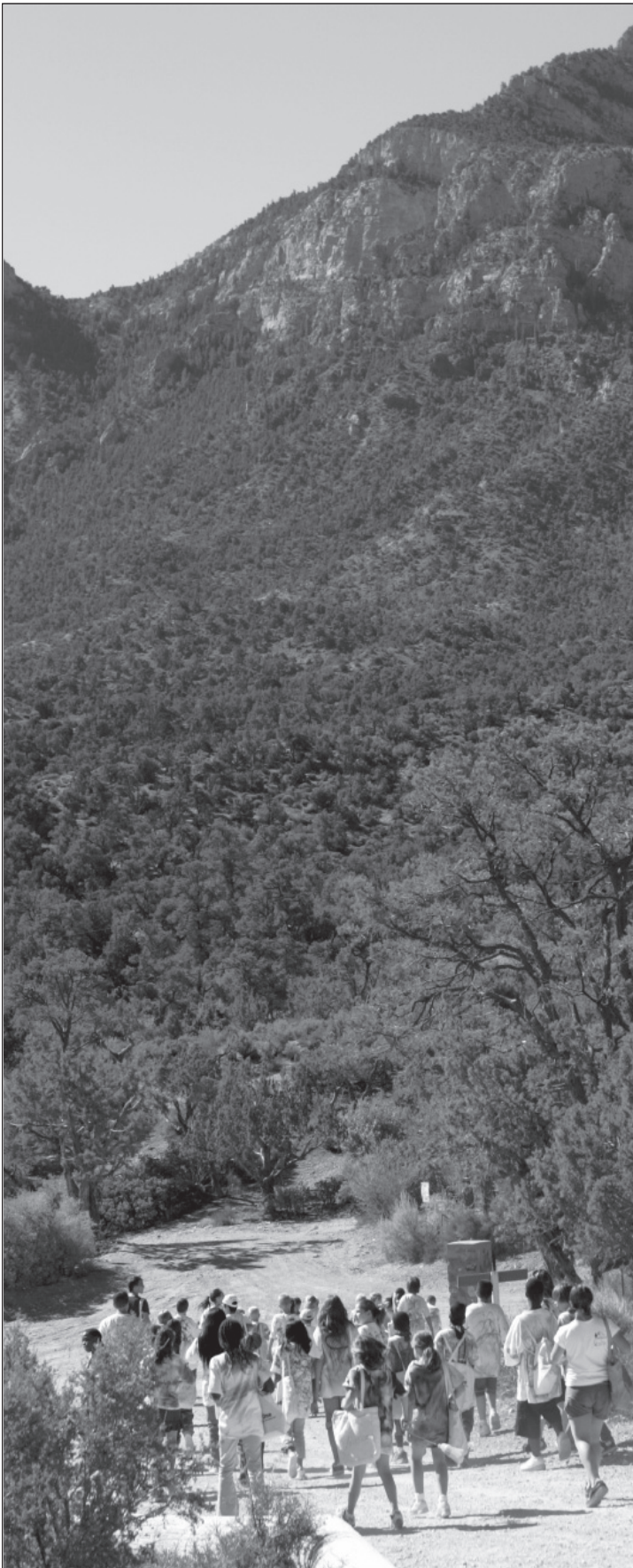
Thursday's records  
High: 77 (1930), Low: 11 (1899)

Visit us online for the complete forecast.

TO FIND EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT

The news and feature stories you're reading in this paper are only a small part of what we present each day. To get it all — local, national and world news, features, business, sports, arts & entertainment, editorials, opinions and reader comments — go online to lasvegassun.com.

LAS VEGASSUN.COM



# THE LAS VEGAS SUN SUMMER CAMP FUND

Every child deserves a camping experience and the Sun Camp Fund is committed to providing camping opportunities for disadvantaged children ages 8-14. **Approximately 700 kids benefit from a camping experience every year.** Help us bring the joy of the outdoors to more Las Vegas area children.

YES! I would like to support the Sun Camp Fund. Enclosed is my contribution of \$

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATEZIP

Send to: Las Vegas Sun Camp Fund, 2360 Corporate Circle, Third Floor, Henderson, NV 89074

Donate online (via PayPal): [www.suncampfund.com](http://www.suncampfund.com)

Tax deductible. 100% of your donation goes to kids. The Las Vegas Sun pays all administrative costs.

LEGISLATURE, FROM PAGE 1:

# GROUP HELPED KILL GROSS RECEIPTS TAX

asked a colleague whether they were allowed to be in there. The staff member wasn't sure. This is when Denis arrived. He asked lobbyist George Ross, whose clients include the Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce, whether he could come in with Sen. Ruben Kihuen, D-Las Vegas. Ross told Denis he would ask Sam McMullen, leader of the Business Lobbyist Group. They ushered in Denis and Kihuen but McMullen barred a Sun reporter. "This is a private meeting," he said. "This is a public building," the reporter said. There was a collective intake of breath from the lobbyists. "Close the door," McMullen said. Denis gave his speech, which was inaudible from outside the room. The lobbyists applauded at the end. McMullen said there was nothing nefarious about this group, which has been meeting since the 1950s or 1960s. "This is a communicating device to alert people to issues or share information on bills," he said. "It sounds sinister, but it's boring." He said the meeting is open "to anyone who shows up, as long as they're a business representative." The Business Lobbyist Group meets between sessions to discuss potential issues, sometimes by teleconference or videoconference. During sessions, they meet weekly, in the Legislative Building, reserving rooms through normal channels. McMullen said there is no leader, though McMullen was the only one at the dais. He described himself as "the facilitator." The wide range of lobbyists — from gaming, mining, health care and other indus-



SAM MORRIS Business lobbyist Sam McMullen works in the second-floor atrium of the Legislative Building on Wednesday in Carson City. McMullen is the "facilitator" of the leaderless Business Lobbyist Group.

tries — sometimes come to a consensus on a particular bill or policy, he said. There are only two rules. First, to attend, you have to be a business lobbyist. Second, things said there can't be attributed to anyone, he said. McMullen said Wednesday that the teachers union margins-tax proposal was discussed. "It wasn't, 'Yeah, (screw) that tax.' It was, 'What problems do you see with it?' I even asked if anyone had arguments in favor of it," he said. Although he downplayed the group's collective clout, McMullen also said it was "the vehicle" the business community used in 2003 to cobble together a coalition to oppose the gross receipts tax. That tax, proposed by former Gov. Kenny Guinn and backed by the gaming and mining industries, was ultimately defeated. This year, the business community is still working to come up with a strategy for dealing with the margins-tax initiative, which will appear on the 2014 ballot if the Legislature doesn't enact it. Business lob-

byists are talking about whether to put an alternative on the ballot or let it go on its own. McMullen said it was too early to talk about alternatives to the teachers' margins tax. He also added that if having a private meeting in a public building "ends up being a problem, we can take it over to a hotel." Denis said after he addressed the room that any private group could reserve a committee room not being used by legislators — he mentioned a PTA gathering scheduled for next week — though it was unclear whether a group could bar participants. Legislative Counsel Bureau Director Rick Combs said, "As far as I can tell, we have never been asked before whether a meeting conducted in the building by a private entity could be closed to the public." He said he would discuss with legislative leadership whether a policy should be developed.

[david.schwartz@lasvegassun.com](mailto:david.schwartz@lasvegassun.com) / 775-687-4597 / @schwartznews



SAM MORRIS Assemblyman John Hambrick takes part in a Ways and Means Committee meeting Tuesday in Carson City. Hambrick drew the short straw on office assignments because of an inflammatory campaign ad.

SMALL OFFICE, FROM PAGE 1:

# HAMBRICK: 'THEY COULD GIVE ME A DESK IN THE HALLWAY'

"I'm putting in a memo for a 12-by-12 expansion right out here," he said looking out the window, at the rooftop. The office was created in 2007, and its first occupant was Bob Beers. No, not the well-known conservative state senator and Las Vegas City councilman. It was the other Bob Beers, elected to one term in the Assembly, mainly because voters were confused. Then there was Ty Cobb, the Assembly Republican who voted against Speaker Barbara Buckley in 2007, the first nay in memory in what had historically been a ceremonial sign of bipartisan niceness on the first day. Then, it was held by Ed Goedhart, whose rift with leadership was not entirely clear. But he was a fiercely conservative lawmaker who was once caught looking at naked ladies on his laptop while on the floor of the Assembly —

accidentally, he said. So, Hambrick's crime: a mailer he sent at the end of a bitter — and successful — campaign by Assembly Republicans last year to oust the presumptive speaker-to-be, Marcus Conklin. The mailer was brutal, even by today's political standard. The piece, sent by Hambrick's political action committee, featured a man's hand over the mouth of a wide-eyed young woman. In large type were the words: "Children are being kidnapped, pimped, raped & beaten because leaders like Assemblyman Marcus Conklin refused to act." Majority Leader William Horne, D-Las Vegas, doesn't shrink from the reason for Hambrick's office assignment. "Mr. Hambrick has that office solely because of that mail piece," he said. "I believe in repercussions, on either side,

for mail pieces that are beyond the pale. ... That's why I did that." In retrospect, Hambrick said he would have done some "wordsmithing" on the language in the mailer. But generally, he stands by it. Hambrick grimaces at the office but doesn't complain, at least in this interview. "Shame on us if we're here for the trappings," he said. "They could give me a desk in the hallway. I wouldn't care." In 30 years in law enforcement, Hambrick said he has had a variety of offices and desks — next to bathrooms, for instance. "Actually," he said, pausing a moment to think, "I can hear the toilets flush here."

[david.schwartz@lasvegassun.com](mailto:david.schwartz@lasvegassun.com) / 775-687-4597 / @schwartznews