

Sandoval mixes optimism with harsh reality

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval mixed an optimistic tone with harsh reality in his first State of the State address on Monday, announcing a focus on economic development, fundamental changes to state programs and calling for "shared sacrifice" during the economic downturn.

In an broad-based, hour-long speech to a joint session of the Nevada Legislature and a packed gallery, Sandoval outlined a \$5.8 billion budget, which takes the state general fund back to 2007 levels.

"Some believe government is the only solution to our current plight," Sandoval said. "I disagree. Unemployment, foreclosures, bankruptcy – the cure is not more government spending, but helping businesses create jobs. The key is to get Nevada working again."

Sandoval proposed "consolidation, elimination, or centralization" of 20 state departments and said jobs will be eliminated and "layoffs will occur."

His budget calls for cuts in per-pupil spending for K-12 education and sharp cuts to higher education.

"Our education system is broken," Sandoval said. "Not the people, but the system."

He called for ending teacher tenure, relying on student achievement data to evaluate teachers and administrators, providing parental choice in selecting schools, and giving individual school districts more autonomy.

"Educators who are effective at teaching students and leading

schools are paid exactly the same as those who are failing," he said.

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