

Board recommends financial relief for counties in Nev. special election

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The Board of Examiners today approved a request for more than half a million dollars from a legislative contingency fund to pay the counties for the cost of the Sept. 13 special election in the 2nd Congressional District.

The board, made up of Gov. Brian Sandoval, Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and Secretary of State Ross Miller, approved the \$539,000 request, which will be considered Aug. 31 by the Legislature's Interim Finance Committee.

Miller said the other options to pay for the election were to pass the costs on to the counties or to use a dwindling pool of federal funds, but that the request from the contingency fund is the best choice. Requiring cash-strapped counties to pay the costs could lead to cutting corners, and Miller said it is important to ensure the integrity of the election.

Miller said his office made every effort to reduce the expenditures to reasonable levels. Initial estimates put the cost at in excess of \$1 million

"We explored every avenue we could to try to reduce costs for the election," he said. "The counties obviously had not budgeted for this election, so allowing them to be reimbursed from the contingency fund gives us a much greater level of comfort that they will ultimately run the election as the public would expect."

Miller said the use of federal Help America Vote Act funds was not recommended because the amount of money in the account is

dwindling. The money has in the past been used to buy the electronic voting machines used in the state's 17 counties for elections. The state has used just under \$150,000 in HAVA funds for the special election, in part to provide replacement voting machines, he said.

Miller said it is too early to estimate the turnout in the election, which pits Mark Amodei, a former state senator, as the Republican, versus state Treasurer Kate Marshall, the Democrat. The race also includes Independent American Party candidate Tim Fasano and independent Helmuth Lehmann. The candidates are seeking to replace former Rep. Dean Heller, who was appointed to the U.S. Senate by Sandoval to replace John Ensign, who resigned.

But Miller said he does expect a low turnout in the race, which encompasses 16 of the state's 17 counties plus a portion of Clark County.