

# Ohio woman named director of tourism in Nevada

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval has appointed Claudia Vecchio as the first director of the new Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. She will begin her job Nov. 14.

The newly constituted department is comprised of the Nevada Commission on Tourism, Division of Museums and History, Nevada Arts Council and the Nevada Indian Commission.

“Claudia is an experienced destination marketer with a solid background in social media and branding,” Sandoval said. “Together with her appreciation for history and culture, her background is ideally suited to taking us to the next level in how we engage with Nevadans and tourists alike.

“I look forward to her leadership in promoting Nevada’s many fine destinations, as well as preserving and enhancing our sense of history, appreciation for the arts, and well-being of our Native American population,” he said. “I am pleased to make this appointment as we kick off Nevada History Month.”

Vecchio previously served as the tourism director in Ohio. In that post, she supervised the overall brand development of state tourism, working closely with the Ohio Historical Society and the Ohio Arts Council to create development programs.

While in Ohio, Vecchio and her team developed a marketing program to assist in the opening of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. She also helped open the Toledo Glass Museum and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati.

In a telephone interview, Vecchio said she was intrigued by the position because of all the state has to offer, from Las Vegas to Virginia City to Lake Tahoe and the many other gems waiting to be discovered by visitors.

“It has everything from one of the largest tourism destinations in the world to these rich, textured, smaller, rural communities that have so much appeal,” she said.

“I so look forward to working with the governor, and with the lieutenant governor and all of the industry partners to help shape this new role – but when we bring that cultural affairs piece into it then you’re really taking about the heart and soul of the state with that kind of a product,” Vecchio said.

Vecchio said she has experience working on Olympic bids as well, which fits in well with efforts under way by the state to submit a bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics for the Lake Tahoe region.

The new agency was created in part due to the state’s budget difficulties. The former Department of Cultural Affairs was eliminated as part of Sandoval’s budget. The museums and other programs will continue, with several functions operating under the new agency.

Vecchio also has an extensive background in marketing, having worked with the Edelman public relations firm in Chicago and Burson-Marsteller in Dallas. She is currently president of Destination Integration in Dallas, where she provides marketing programs for small and mid-sized communities that integrate tourism and economic development components.

Vecchio has a bachelor’s degree in organizational communications from Brigham Young University. She is the recipient of several Public Relations Society of America and America Marketing Association Awards, including recognition for web marketing. She has also served on the Travel Industry Association of America’s Council of State Tourism Directors.