

Whittemore, Seeno lawsuits' impact may ripple through Nevada

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

Some might say it's just a legal battle between rich, powerful men.

But the court fight ensuing between one of Nevada's most high-profile lobbyists, Harvey Whittemore, and the owners of the Bay Area's largest home-building company, Tom Seeno and Albert Seeno Jr., could threaten the network of business, philanthropy and influence that both have worked their entire lives to create.

Competing lawsuits between Whittemore and the Seenos make accusations that could ultimately land someone in prison. They include claims of embezzlement, racketeering and threats of murder and physical violence. If any of the claims prove true, they also could result in the loss of several valuable and coveted licenses – including the gaming license for the casinos run by the Peppermill. The Seenos are minority partners in the gaming empire and are listed on the gaming license.

The Seenos claim Whittemore stole funds from their shared business, the Wingfield Nevada Group. If that claim is true, it could cost Whittemore his license to practice law and curtail his ability to raise funds for philanthropy and political candidates – something he is known for throughout the state, giving big contributions to some of the state's most politically connected candidates.

Sam McMullen, a Las Vegas lawyer and lobbyist who has known Whittemore for decades, said Whittemore has always been

willing to step up and organize political fundraisers. And he has done it across party lines, he said.

“As long as I’ve known him, Harvey has been a force in Nevada politics,” McMullen said. “It will be a loss if he was no longer active. He has done a great deal for Nevada.”

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