

# Labor Department says no to Nevada consolidation plan

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The U.S. Department of Labor has rejected Nevada's request for a waiver to consolidate its three workforce investment boards into one, due largely to opposition to the plan by the Southern Nevada panel.

Frank Woodbeck, director of the state Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation had proposed the plan to consolidate the three separate boards that oversee workforce development, which was expected to reduce administrative expenses by \$5 million.

"The waiver request was submitted in July, and we received a response in August to our request and that request was denied," he told the governor's Workforce Investment Board at its meeting last week. "The denial was based on the fact that the members of the southern board were in opposition to the waiver and the consolidation."

The Northern Nevada and state boards supported the consolidation effort.

But Woodbeck noted that the consolidation effort has produced some positive results, including a significant reduction in administrative expenses incurred by the southern Nevada board, called Workforce Connections, under the leadership of Executive Director Ardell Galbreth.

Galbreth, who took over initially as interim director in April, reduced several top six-figure salaries and the size of the agency's staff by more than half.

Woodbeck said the effort at consolidation has improved

communications between his agency and the two local boards.

“So the work at trying to do board consolidation, etc., has not gone for naught,” he said. “It has been successful to a great degree in that we have a much greater line of communication with the directors of the two local boards, and I think we’ll make progress as time goes on.”

Woodbeck, with Gov. Brian Sandoval’s support, had sought the consolidation in part because of excessive administrative costs identified in audits of Workforce Connections.

The most recent audit, performed by the state Division of Internal Audits and released in May, found that Workforce Connections spent nearly twice as much on administration and monitoring of its programs than its northern counterpart.

More than \$27 million in federal job training funds were awarded to the two local workforce development boards by the Board of Examiners in August, before the decision on the waiver had been made by the U.S. Department of Labor. The Southern Nevada board received more than \$19 million in funding for the coming two years.