

# Nevada lawmaker who wanted TRPA disbanded changes mind

By Ed Vogel, Las Vegas Review Journal

CARSON CITY – A state legislator who helped lead the effort to pull Nevada out of the bi-state agency that controls planning and growth at the pristine Lake Tahoe has changed his mind.

After meeting with California legislators, state Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, said he does not believe that it is necessary for Nevada to drop out of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

“I see no reason pulling out of TRPA if we continue in the fashion we now have,” Lee said in a telephone conversation Thursday.

During the 2011 session, Lee and Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden, authored Senate Bill 271, which calls for the governor to pull Nevada out of the TRPA in 2015 unless the planning agency revises its regional plan, ends a supermajority voting requirement, and considers the effects of changing economic conditions at the lake.

A legislative committee was appointed to meet with their counterparts in California and prepare a report for the governor. Gov. Brian Sandoval, a former TRPA member, signed the bill.

Lee said he was concerned that decisions by the TRPA and the threat of lawsuits from the League to Save Lake Tahoe were blocking any type of development at the lake.

“People were blocked even from putting in new asphalt in their driveways,” Lee said. “We want to do things that make the lake economically vibrant.”

Lee said local government agencies were not asserting any control over housing and commercial development at the lake.

“Every time the TRPA did something, the league threatened to sue so they abandoned their powers. The TRPA should not be the building department for the lake,” he said.

He said California legislators were not entirely aware of the problems Nevada faced in economic development at Lake Tahoe, but now they have put together a bi-state group to iron out concerns.

Lee was defeated in the June primary election by Patricia Spearman. Since he won't be in the Legislature in 2013, he said Settelmeyer will take the report to Sandoval that Nevada should remain in the TRPA, the bi-state agency that oversees much of the land use and environmental matters involving property surrounding Lake Tahoe.

Lee served as chairman of the legislative committee dealing with Lake Tahoe matters, while Settelmeyer was the chair of the three-member delegation assigned to meet with California.

Although the Tahoe pullout bill was approved by nine of the 11 state senators and passed the Assembly 28-14, Lee came under fire from environmental groups during his re-election battle for backing it.