

Nevada bill would keep state in TRPA Compact

By Sandra Chereb, AP

CARSON CITY – A bill that would rescind Nevada's threat to leave the decades-old Lake Tahoe Compact over a rift with California was introduced Monday in the state Senate.

SB229 seeks to repeal a law passed by lawmakers in 2011 and signed by Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval. The law would allow Nevada to leave the Compact and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that has governed development and environmental controls in the scenic Lake Tahoe Basin since 1969.



Politicians see a state line, but Lake Tahoe is only one lake. Photo/LTN file

Two years ago, Nevada lawmakers blamed their counterparts in California for favoring tough environmental standards that they said were hindering development and the economy. Among other things, they cited a regional plan that hadn't been updated since the late 1980s.

That hurdle was cleared in December, when TRPA's Governing Board approved a plan giving more development control to local governments. The plan was viewed by most as far from perfect,

but a necessary compromise that wouldn't hinder environmental programs designed to protect Tahoe's famed blue waters.

Monday's bill was hailed by conservationists.

"We're excited to see the bill introduced today and we're optimistic we can get it passed this session so Nevada can recommit to the future of Lake Tahoe," said Kyle Davis with the Nevada Conservation League.

Assemblyman David Bobzien, D-Reno, agreed, saying that now that Tahoe's Regional Plan has been updated, "it's time to come back together."

But a Republican senator who testified in favor of Nevada pulling out of TRPA said the same issues that forced Nevada's hand in 2011 remain.

Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden, noted a lawsuit has already been filed challenging the new Regional Plan.

The lawsuit was filed in February in U.S. District Court in Sacramento. In it, the Sierra Club and Friends of the West Shore claim the rules that TRPA adopted in December will erode environmental protection of the mountain lake by allowing denser development and giving more control to local governments.

"Obviously to me the lawsuit proved that SB271 still needs to be in play," Settelmeyer said.

Bobzien, however, said there was nothing in the original law that conditioned Nevada's staying in the Compact on whether others file lawsuits.

"People have a right to litigate," he said.