

Calif.-Nev. may drop out of state community college tuition fee for some Tahoe residents

By Kathryn Reed

California and Nevada state senators are working to revive the good neighbor policy so students in the Lake Tahoe Basin would not have to pay out of state tuition to attend nearby community colleges.

State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, on Feb. 27 introduced the legislation – known as SB605. His counterpart in Nevada, state Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden, will soon be doing the same.

“We want to make sure youth in our community have affordable options for affordable education and then the opportunity to build careers and find jobs in the basin as well,” Gaines told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We hope we’ll be successful in both legislatures and provide some relief in a basin that doesn’t know borders.”

No one in Settelmeyer’s office responded to *LTN*.

The bill would limit the number of students crossing the state line to 200.

One of the reasons the bill has failed twice before is that lawmakers were concerned about how many students would take advantage of the good neighbor policy and what fiscal impact that could have.

The bills mirror each other, which has not happened before. The laws would benefit Lake Tahoe Basin students in specific ZIP codes, and involve Lake Tahoe Community College and

Western Nevada Community College.

This would be a six-year pilot program. Gaines said at the end of that time period officials would analyze whether the program was working, and if adjustments need to be made, including increasing or decreasing the number of students who may participate.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo has been at the forefront of trying to make this a reality. She credited the two lawmakers for being “champions” of the cause. The men represent Lake Tahoe in their respective legislatures.

The good neighbor policy has been in place before, but Nevada dropped it a few years ago. This means students going to Whittell High School cannot drive the three miles to LTCC, but instead must go over a mountain pass to the nearest community college in Nevada – at least if they don’t want to pay the exorbitant out of state tuition fee.

Gaines said his office has been speaking with the Association of California Community Colleges and has gotten support for the legislation.