

Nev. eyes \$9.5M for tech job training

By Riley Snyder, AP

There's a small issue with large technology companies like Tesla and Switch expanding to Nevada – the state doesn't have nearly enough qualified and trained workers to meet the expected demand.

The shortage has led Nevada lawmakers to consider bills that would allocate nearly \$10 million toward high-tech workforce development at state community colleges.

Supporters say the measures would provide badly needed grant funding to help meet the need of emerging industries in the state.

Sen. Joyce Woodhouse introduced three bills this week to the Senate Finance Committee that would fund science, technology, engineering and math programs. She said the proposals would help prepare the state for Tesla and other major businesses. The committee took no action on the bills.

SB496 would allow Nevada community colleges to apply for up to \$6 million in grants to help fund curriculum that corresponds to emerging industries. The bill would also allow funds to be used for equipment or facilities.

No one testified against the bills, though Sen. Pete Goicoechea raised concerns that the majority of funds would go toward southern Nevada schools and skip over community colleges in rural Nevada.

SB493 would allocate \$3.5 million to a matching grant program for colleges, nonprofit groups and private businesses to support industry programs.

Mike Willden, chief of staff for Gov. Brian Sandoval, said the governor's budget already includes \$3 million for such workforce grants and contains funds for a staffer to oversee the program. Woodhouse said she was open to combining the two proposals.

SB236 would require a state council devoted to promoting the new jobs to meet more often and hold events to recognize high-achieving students.