

Opinion: Good Neighbor Policy is good for everyone

Publisher's note: *The Nevada Senate Education Committee unanimously approved the bill April 2.*

By Kindred Murillo

It's been nearly four years since I moved to South Lake Tahoe and became president of Lake Tahoe Community College. When I first arrived, I heard an earful from community members who were upset about the loss of the Good Neighbor Policy (GNP). This policy was established by the Nevada System of Higher Education in 1988. It made it possible for basin students living on the Nevada side to attend LTCC at California resident rates. The GNP was discontinued by Nevada in 2011 for reasons that were understandable at the time: all state higher education systems faced deep cuts during the country's recession, and there was a clear need to reduce costs.



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The unintended consequence of the decision to end the GNP is now apparent. The people who are most affected by the loss of the GNP are primarily residents living and working in the Stateline area, mostly in low wage jobs. Many of them were born and raised in Tahoe, brought here by parents seeking work in the many tourist-oriented businesses found in the basin. They are often what we call "place-bound," meaning they don't

have the financial footing to move elsewhere to attend college and improve their job prospects. They work hard, often in multiple jobs, just to get by. They are stuck with minimal skills, minimal education, and little hope of breaking out of that cycle without access to education. Community colleges in rural areas evolved out of K-12 systems to serve these “place-bound” students.

While the number of people affected by the loss of the Good Neighbor Policy isn't massive, the policy's cancellation has clearly hurt the basin's most vulnerable population. Our community's success and growth depends on a highly trained workforce. When a portion of our local population cannot get the skills and education they need, the entire basin suffers economically. I am passionate about reinstating a form of the Good Neighbor Policy so LTCC can once again be a good neighbor to Tahoe residents living on both sides of the state line who want the opportunity for a better life. They are much more likely to achieve that if they can access a community college.

I encourage you to support Nevada Senate Bill 414, written by Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden. The bill, currently under consideration by the Senate Education committee, encourages the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education to enter into a reciprocal agreement with California to create reciprocity for residents in the Lake Tahoe Basin as stated in California Senate Bill 605. SB605 will create a limited reciprocity six-year pilot program for residents in the Lake Tahoe Basin to attend Lake Tahoe Community College and Western Nevada College at resident rates. If you believe, as I do, that we are one community regardless of borders, and that all of our citizens deserve access to education, then please let the members of Nevada's Senate Education committee know that. A list of committee members with links to their contact information is [here](#).

On behalf of the many students who will benefit from this bill on both sides of the border, I thank you.

Kindred Murillo is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.