



March 28, 2025

Chair Flores and Senate Government Affairs Committee,

Nevada REALTORS® is opposed to SB319. The bill is not necessary, if there is a cost savings to merging three local fire districts they have the ability to make those changes and see those cost savings without this legislation. Washoe County residents are already struggling with rising costs of living, from inflation to increased utility rates and housing costs. A new assessment which would be charged with property tax will not only raise mortgage payments for homeowners but will also lead to higher rental costs. At a time when housing affordability is a critical issue in our state, this bill increases the problem rather than alleviating it.

SB 319 is being justified as part of a fire services consolidation effort between the City of Reno, City of Sparks, and Washoe County. However, it is already clear, without study, that this fire consolidation does not guarantee expanded coverage, increased staffing, or improved emergency response times. Instead, it merely shifts administrative and operational structures without a direct benefit to the taxpayers who are being asked to foot the bill.

NRS 474 allows counties to create a fire protection district for all or part of the county and allows a portion of the assessed property tax to fund that fire protection district. Which means law would currently allow for Reno and Sparks Fire Departments to become part of the allowable fire protection district. NRS also allows these fire protection districts to be represented by the board of county commissioners, such as Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, or a separately elected board, such as the North Las Tahoe Fire Protection District. Currently operational in Washoe County.

The proposal in SB319 changes the make-up of a fire protection district to be represented by the 3 governing bodies within the proposed legislation, as it does not seem to be the intent to include North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection in this proposal. This is unnecessary, if they do not want the new board to the board of county commissioners, they could change the creation to be a freely elected board.

SB319 also allows for an assessment which is outside the current property tax. The bill does not create any guardrails around what that assessment could be. It is not clear if the current property tax going to TMFPD would continue to go to fund this new district, or if any of the cities collected taxes would be reduced to offset this new assessment. This means that property tax appear to stay at the same rate while a new assessment to fund a service currently being provided to all residents within the boundaries of Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the cities of Reno and Sparks is added to the expense of homeowners.

While Nevada continues to face housing and affordability issues, the allowance of a measure such as SB319 which will make home ownership more expensive is not going in the right direction. It is for these reasons we ask you to oppose SB319 and not add a new unknown cost to homeownership.