UNITING OUR COMMUNITY TO IMPROVE PEOPLE’S LIVES

ADVOCACY AT UNITED WAY OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

United Way of Southern Nevada (UWSN) is a nonpartisan and independent advocate for young children, students, working families, and community development through a focus on Student Success, Workforce Development, and Community Supports. UWSN advocates for opportunities to improve early education, high school achievement, workforce readiness, and emergency assistance.

UWSN’s advocacy focuses on local, state, and federal policies and budgets that help create more inclusive and prosperous communities in our state. For United Way of Southern Nevada, the broad reach of our organization increases the importance of advocacy efforts to our mission.

UWSN’s service area includes 75% of the total population in the State of Nevada and is represented by a significant proportion of elected offices at state and federal levels. Approximately three-quarters of both the Nevada State Assembly and the Nevada State Senate represent communities UWSN is working in. At the federal level, three out of the four individuals representing Nevada in the House of Representatives are based in Southern Nevada.

UWSN regularly supports and shares the views of the United Way network and Southern Nevada’s nonprofit organizations that support working families and low-income households. In 2020 and 2021, United Way of Southern Nevada adopted a proactive leadership role to ensure an equitable recovery from the pandemic, the expansion of anti-human trafficking legislation, and the expansion of preschool options in Nevada.

The organization works with the UWSN Board of Directors, Public Policy Committee, and a network of business, nonprofit, and community leaders.

Together, we identify policy priorities and strategies that help the nonprofit sector step up to the challenge of pandemic response, recovery, and rebuilding.

STATE OF NEVADA HIGHLIGHTS

Nevada Ready! State Pre-K Program
UWSN partners with the Nevada Department of Education, United Way of Northern Nevada & the Sierra, and over 20 preschools to promote early learning in Nevada. The State committed $19.7M to support Nevada Ready! during 2021 and 2022. UWSN is administering $9.9M of this funding to ensure children from low-income households have access to preschool.

Continued Expansion of the State of Nevada Grants Office
New legislation established the Office of Grant Procurement, Coordination, and Management to increase the amount of federal funding the State of Nevada is able to receive. This will help nonprofit organizations serve the people of Nevada.

NV Policy Council on Human Trafficking
Sponsored by United Way and UPS, the policy council is a forum established to advance policies that reduce human trafficking in Nevada. Legislative successes during the 2021 session included 7 bills that became law. These new laws increased the statute of limitations, expanded state capacity to fight human trafficking, and provide for supportive services for children.

The State of Nevada holds a legislative session every two years.
RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL NEED IN THE SOUTHERN NEVADA COMMUNITY – THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In 2020, UWSN helped to coordinate the nonprofit sector’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UWSN began hosting the Nonprofit Sector Call (English) and Junta Comunitaria del Sector Social (Spanish) to create a regular virtual meeting space for leaders across the Southern Nevada community.

These calls serve as a hub for nonprofits and other organizations to coordinate and strategize a response to the pandemic.

The pandemic and economic shutdowns brought to light many existing disparities, and exacerbated barriers to access to resources for many under-resourced and marginalized communities across the country.

Digital literacy, language access, transportation, unemployment, and education all became more important during the pandemic. In conjunction with sector-wide calls, UWSN launched the community-level response to the pandemic through the Emergency Assistance and Community Needs Fund.

NONPROFIT & PHILANTHROPY DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

In March 2021, the nonprofit, philanthropy, and government sectors came together to support each other as part of Nonprofit and Philanthropy Day at the Legislature. The event celebrated how key partners collaborated in their response to the COVID-19 crisis.

In April 2021, United Way of Southern Nevada and United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra were honored to celebrate United Way Day at the Legislature. Throughout our years of working together, we have partnered with other nonprofits, private industry, and government agencies to encourage Nevada’s youngest learners, build pathways out of poverty, and get people back to work through education and workforce development.
NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) & Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

UWSN is a strong supporter of the CTC and EITC expansion. These tax credits empower working families to stay above the poverty line and provide for their households. Both tax credits stimulate local business activity, improve child development, and generate additional tax revenue for local governments. For every EITC dollar a recipient earns, they return $1.50-$2.00 to the economy.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

The VITA program trains and certifies volunteers to help low- and moderate-income families who cannot afford the fees for professional tax services, but who still need assistance to accurately complete their taxes. Each year, local VITA sites are coordinated by the Nevada Free Taxes Coalition. The coalition deploys volunteers who ensure working Nevadans can claim and keep the full amount of their refund. UWSN advocated to ensure VITA became a permanent program.

Universal Giving Pandemic Response & Recovery Act

In March 2020, Congress enacted a $300 charitable deduction for cash gifts from nonitemizers for 2020. Over the past two years, 87% of donations to UWSN were under $300. Extension of the universal charitable deduction is helping to encourage giving during this critical time of unprecedented need in communities in Southern Nevada and across the United States.

Small Business Child Care Investment Act

This bipartisan bill allows qualified non-profit childcare providers to access the same SBA loan programs available to for-profit providers. UWSN worked with members of Congress to share the positive impact that affordable, high-quality care and education options have provided for both children and working families. This legislation allows nonprofit childcare and early education providers to increase capacity to meet the needs of working families in Nevada.
LOCAL ADVOCACY IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

UWSN is responsive to requests for support from community partners and local government officials, including collaboration with the Clark County Commission, the City of Las Vegas, the City of Henderson, and the City of North Las Vegas. In 2020-2021, this work included the administration of grant-funded programs through public-private partnerships like the UWSN CARES Child Care program, which supported 784 children from 493 households with child care subsidies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UWSN also strives to expand opportunities for parents, workers, and residents to participate in local advocacy efforts. In 2021, UWSN and Unidos Por Nevada hosted an open forum to enable parents and guardians the opportunity to interact directly with CCSD leadership on topics related to hygiene at home and in the classroom, safety measures, mental health, and resources for special needs students.

Other examples of local advocacy include communication and engagement with local elected officials. UWSN often works with City Councilmembers and Clark County Commissioners to advance community priorities.

Volunteers celebrate a year of giving, advocating, and volunteering at the 2021 UWSN Day of Caring.

GET INVOLVED

United Way understands that effective advocacy takes collaboration, determination, and a well-educated community. These activities are overseen by an all-volunteer Public Policy Committee. This board-level committee is made up members from the Board and community and meets every month to track advocacy efforts and coordinate staff, volunteer, and board member efforts.

United Way advocacy focuses on the policies and proposals that can effectively reduce poverty and expand opportunities for all members of our community. Although the next Nevada State Legislative session will not take place until 2023, United Way of Southern Nevada will be actively working to help create positive change through local, state, and national policy efforts.

United Way of Southern Nevada offers a variety of opportunities to give, advocate, and volunteer for programs supporting working families across the region. Visit uwsn.org/advocate to be a part of the change and join our efforts.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Irene Bustamante Adams, Chair
Workforce Connections

Alex Bybee
Communities in Schools

Kenneth Retzl
Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

Kelly Stevens
United Way of Northern Nevada & the Sierra

Jana Wilcox-Lavin
Opportunity 180

Janet Quintero, Staff Liaison
United Way of Southern Nevada

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Julian High
President & CEO
United Way of Southern Nevada
702.892.2300
JulianH@uwsn.org

Janet Quintero
Director, Government & Community Relations
United Way of Southern Nevada
702.892.2375
JanetQ@uwsn.org