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Senate Republicans Announce Education Priority Initiative

(Carson City, NV) – Senate Republicans today announced their Education Priority Initiative, which will serve as a competing measure to the flawed margins tax in the 2014 General Election. The Education Priority Initiative is supported by Senators Roberson, Kieckhefer, Hardy, Brower, Hammond and Hutchison.

The Education Priority Initiative will generate over \$600 million per biennium to accomplish the following three education priorities: (1) reduce class sizes by hiring thousands of new teachers; (2) develop and fund English language learner programs, and (3) establish an education stabilization fund.

The Education Priority Initiative will set a 10% net proceeds tax on gold and silver mining revenue, which will be specifically dedicated to state funding for education. In addition, local governments in rural Nevada will continue to receive net proceeds tax revenue on gold and silver mining at current levels.

“We believe Nevada’s children deserve a first-class education. To that end, we have heard loud and clear from parents and educators that class sizes in many schools throughout Nevada are simply too large and must be reduced to improve the learning environment. In Clark County, both the school district and teachers have agreed on a long-term class size-reduction plan to hire 4,000 teachers over the next four years,” said Senate Minority Leader Michael Roberson, R-Henderson. “We embrace this plan, and more fundamentally, we will fund the plan with the passage of the Education Priority Initiative.”

“We also have approximately 77,000 students throughout the state who cannot speak proficient English. We feel this is one of the reasons why Nevada ranks last nationally in high school graduation rates. These children will succeed when they are given instruction and resources to learn English,” said Senate Assistant Minority Leader Ben Kieckhefer, R-Reno. “With the passage of the Education Priority Initiative, we will provide the pathways to success.”

“The past four years have taught us that Nevada is not immune from economic downturns. To be fiscally responsible and to prepare for the inevitable fluctuations in the economy, we will dedicate a meaningful portion of the revenue from the Education Priority Initiative to a long-term education stabilization fund, to ensure for Nevada children a stable source of education revenue for years to come,” said Senate Minority Whip Joe Hardy, R-Boulder City.

“We applaud Governor Sandoval’s current proposed budget, which significantly increases education funding this biennium. We will continue to work with both the governor and our colleagues in the legislature to prioritize funding for education this biennium, while understanding that current revenues are limited”, said Senator Greg Brower, R-Reno. “However, going forward, we believe the Education Priority Initiative is critical to improving educational opportunities for all Nevada children and to making Nevada an even more attractive place for families and businesses to call home.”

“There is a right way and a wrong way to raise revenue to better fund education,” said Senator Scott Hammond, R-Las Vegas. “The margins tax is a job-destroying tax that will force businesses to close and drive jobs out of Nevada, and it fails to ensure that more revenue actually goes to the classroom. On the other hand, the Education Priority Initiative will bring more equity to the current tax structure and will guarantee the reduction of class size so our children can learn in a more fitting environment.”

“We look forward to bringing everyone to the table, including our democratic and republican colleagues as well as Governor Sandoval, to gather input and obtain support for putting the Education Priority Initiative before Nevada voters on the 2014 General Election Ballot,” said Senator Mark Hutchison, R-Las Vegas. “We understand that Nevadans elected us to work across the aisle, to solve the challenges facing our state, and, most importantly, to lead. With the Education Priority Initiative, we believe we are doing just that.”

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