

# ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

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**NNDA**  
Northern Nevada  
Development Authority

## Linking Federal Priorities with Nevada



**Rob Hooper**  
President & CEO

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear Nevada's senior U.S. Senator Dean Heller provide an update on Congressional priorities and activities. While Senator Heller's comments encompassed many areas, he spent significant time discussing economic growth, infrastructure, national security, and trade.

The information he shared reminded me of the presentations to the Nevada delegation, including representatives from our Sierra Region, back in November 2017 when we gathered on the White House campus for a special convention hosted by the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. This agency is the primary liaison between the White House and state, county, local, and tribal governments. Building new and maintaining existing relationships with governors, mayors, county officials, tribal leaders, and state legislators is a key component of its mission. The Office works with federal agencies and departments to ensure appropriate coordination between the federal government and state, county, local and tribal governments.

Senator Heller's remarks aligned with the priority actions provided to us during that November meeting by many federal departments. Here is a summary of what was presented.

Department of Energy (DOE) is working to expand the innovations generated by its system of national laboratories. A key focus area is geothermal and solar research and development. DOE has allocated \$6.5 billion of its annual budget for high priority cleanup projects.

Reducing Environmental Impact Study approvals to under one year is high on the priority list for the Department of Interior (DOI). In addition to restoring trust in the agency by local communities, DOI has allocated \$5.5 billion to give back to states in the form of block grants. A key objective for the agency is to manage federal lands for multiple use and sustainable yield. Land transfers back to the states are being researched, along with global market paths for oil and mineral exports. Finally, DOI is working to streamline the processes associated with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Department of Transportation (DOT) is expected to play a major role in rebuilding our nation's infrastructure. DOT is working on regulatory reform, expanding its loan program, and streamlining approval processes. The Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program has a budget of \$1.5 billion, with 25% allocated for rural innovation. Expanding the national rail program and innovation is also a priority. Finally, DOT is seeking to expand and grow the use of Unmanned Autonomous Vehicles (UAV) through public-private partnerships. To support this, the agency is also focused on its Automated Driving Systems (ADS) program innovations and nimble regulatory processes.

NNDA is already working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as we have been awarded two EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment Cooperative Agreements to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct planning and community involvement related to brownfield sites. Currently, the agency is working on regulatory reform with a focus on manufacturing. The goals are energy independence and economic growth by reducing unnecessary regulations while still protecting human health and the environment.

For Health and Human Services (HHS), combatting the opioid crisis is at the top of their list, both treatment and prevention. HHS is also working on more effective mental health treatments, especially for serious types of mental health diseases. The Veterans Administration (VA) shares these priorities for our men and women who served in the military.

The focus of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is helping folks off of programs, instead of onto them, and providing assistance to achieve financial independence and self-sufficiency. HUD is also reviewing its rural programs to improve their effectiveness.

Expanding access to capital for rural areas through local banks is a key goal for the Small Business Administration (SBA). Easier access to SBA-guaranteed loans is also an important focus for the agency. In addition, SBA is working on improving the ability for small businesses to contract with the federal government and advocating for small businesses regarding related regulatory reform by other federal agencies.

To support economic and business growth in general, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is working on regulatory reform. OMB is also researching government reorganization for efficiency and cost effectiveness to better serve U.S. taxpayers.

Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a bilateral trade focus for increasing exports. It is reviewing and determining what regulatory reform would best meet the needs of those served by the agency. USDA has a strong focus on rural areas and their requirements, including better and greater access to broadband.

While NASA and the Department of Commerce were not part of the November gathering, their priorities are worth noting. Robotics for space exploration and aeronautics innovations are the focus for NASA. Regulatory reform is a focus for Commerce, along with the development of the next generation manufacturing workforce and more commercial manufacturing technology innovation. NNDA already has an existing relationship with this agency. Our organization has the distinction of having the longest Memorandum of Understanding, in the state, with the U.S. Commercial Service for international export support.

NNDA is already working to forge and foster relationships with the Cabinet agencies that presented to the Nevada delegation. By doing so, we can identify federal resources that, when combined together, provide solution pathways to support and enable the growth of the Sierra Region's economic ecosystem. As we put the puzzle pieces together, NNDA can better help our new and resident companies navigate how to access the programs and the incentives they offer.

While the Department of Labor did not present during our convention, it is common knowledge that ensuring a skilled workforce is a top priority for the agency. In support of that focus, please join us on Wednesday, February 28, 2018 for our monthly NNDA breakfast, from 6:45-8:30 am at the Carson Nugget Casino. Shelly Aldean, President of Capital City C.I.R.C.L.E.S. Initiative and Frank Woodbeck, Nevada System of Higher Education Executive Director of Workforce Development will join me in providing information regarding what is being done at state and local levels to address Nevada's labor shortage. Visit [www.nnda.org](http://www.nnda.org) for more information.