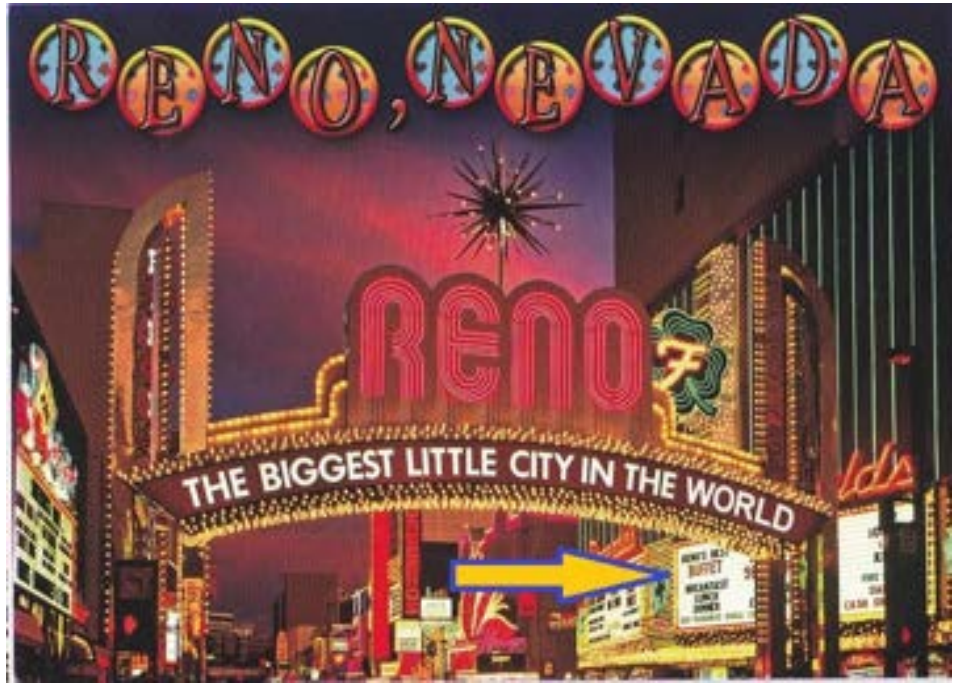
Reno-Washoe Fire Service Dysfunction

Washoe County has many Fire Fighting Services and Agencies

https://www.reno.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/93391/638675284509930000

The RFD Labor Contract is a must read



WatchDogJeff brings you this info

Firefighting in Washoe County involves many different agencies and groups including Tribal (Pyramid Lake), volunteers, Reno-Tahoe Airport, Sparks, Reno, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD), Reno, North Lake Tahoe (NLTFD), Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) and more

And they do not always get along. They generally not only respond to fires but Hazmat, accidents, and similar events. In some cases stations may be closed for various reasons. Reno has experienced many devasting fires over the years including the Davis Fire of 2024.

More on this later but it is the front and end of this presentation. BRC = Blue Ribbon Commission

The BRC strongly believes that an independent regional fire department governed by an autonomous board, free of political grandstanding and in-fighting is the ultimate answer and therefore the ultimate goal. The county should lead the way of regional collaboration by starting small and working toward larger collaboration efforts with other agencies.

The Point here is basically that Reno wants the County (TMFPD) to provide free emergency services in outlaying annexed city of Reno without compensation. Then station 'brown outs" (closures) add additional demand on the County.

The following is a guest post submitted by Tom Daley. It was printed in the Reno Gazette Journal as an op-ed piece. Fire news link
Automatic fire aid – The Mayor doth protest too much

On January 22, 2020 the Reno City Council considered the …denial of the Mortensen Ranch development … Mayor Schieve learned that her fire department could not reach this development within their approved response time, …
When her Fire Marshal testified that the closer Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) Station #40 Mogul, could reach the entry point to this development within 4-5 minutes, the Mayor launched into a rant about why the County (District) was not serving this area, suggesting that such response was a necessity for public safety. She conveniently omitted the fact that this City annexed part of the County and its property tax revenue now go to City coffers, despite the City being unable to service it, while demanding the County (TMFPD) do so for free. A little history is in order.
On March 15, 2012 Reno's manager Andrew Clinger, at the direction of Mayor Bob Cashell, terminated the existing automatic aid agreement between Reno and the TMFPD, effective April 15, 2012. Despite subsequent offers by the TMFPD Board of Fire Commissioners, the City refused to renew that agreement.
In the 2015 legislative session a bill was introduced to require automatic aid for fires within Washoe County (SB-185 – Kieckhefer). Mayor Schieve and her puppet master fire union, IAFF Local 731, vociferously opposed the legislation. Despite their opposition, the bill passed unanimously in the state Assembly, with only one dissenting vote in the state Senate and was signed into law.
The subsequent initial TMFPD/Reno automatic aid agreement for fires was for one year and, when expired, a multi-year extension was approved spanning October 2016 – June 2019. The TMFPD Board approved a further extension on May 21, 2019 (June 2019 thru June 2021) and the City Council approved that extension on June 12, 2019.
So yes, Mayor Schieve, the TMFPD will continue to bail your City out for free, providing your dispatchers ask for help, but only until our Fire Commissioners revise the agreement to provide greater equity for TMFPD taxpayers.
And finally, Mayor, you might heed the paraphrased colloquy of Col. Jessep ('A Few Good Men'), with respect to TMFPD's help, 'Reno wants us on that call, Reno needs us on that call….so I'd rather you just say, 'thank you' and go on your way!'

Mayor Schieve's 'Quixotic' Fire Plan: Ignoring Expert Advice, Grabbing Taxpayer Dollars

NN&V Staff February 16, 2025

(Tom Daly) – Like Don Quixote pursuing the impossible dream, Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve has, once again, suggested a consolidated fire department for Washoe County may be coming.

She hinted at same in a joint meeting she requested of Reno, Sparks, Washoe County and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) electeds on February 6th.
Ironically, Washoe County's other fire district, the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District (NLTFPD), was not in attendance. Snubbed?

In her opening comments Mayor Schieve mentioned both the importance of reliable water and power distribution systems, when wildfires impact both. Yet, no representative of either TMWA or NV Energy was on the dais nor made a presentation.

State Sen. Skip Daly (S-13) announced he had introduced a bill draft request (BDR) to provide a framework for needed legislation, should the local governing agencies move in the direction of consolidation, but no details were revealed as to how taxation, governance, operations, debt service or collective bargaining agreements might work.

Similar Reno consolidation proposals in 2015 and 2016 were rejected by our Washoe County Commissioners when they would have resulted in closing three TMFPD stations in the suburbs, while maintaining the featherbedding staffing and leadership model of the Reno Fire Department (RFD).

Several expert studies over the 2014-2022 period have, almost uniformly, made two, yet unfulfilled, recommendations that would improve service delivery to citizens by area fire service organizations.
The first was 'fix dispatch'.

There are four dispatch agencies for fires in Washoe County. Those are operated by Reno, Sparks, REMSA (for the TMFPD) and Grass Valley (CA) for the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District (NLTFPD).

The 2017 IXP study estimated a single consolidated dispatch agency would save taxpayers of involved jurisdictions $991K per year in operating costs. The current project to have all of those agencies operate with the same dispatch software has yet to become operational.

Op-Ed page 2 by Tom Daly:
Even if successful, those jurisdictions would continue to maintain separate, expensive and redundant dispatch operations with no obligation to dispatch the closest units to a fire regardless of the fire's location.

Reno, from 2017 thru October 2024, routinely refused to dispatch TMFPD units into the city when those TMFPD units are closer than RFD's units.

The related second recommendation is to employ unrestricted automatic aid, with the closest units (plural) responding to emergencies regardless of the incident's jurisdiction.

When the Nevada legislature in 2015 mandated automatic aid for fire for all Washoe County fire agencies, Schieve, her city manager and fire chief all opposed the legislation, SB-185.

While that legislation was enacted, it unfortunately 'sunsetted' in 2017.

Note that Clark County and the cities of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas have operated with a single consolidated fire dispatch agency and with unrestricted automatic aid successfully for more than three decades, while each fire department there remains autonomous.

The realities are the TMFPD and NLTFPD have dedicated property tax authority to fund their operations while Reno Fire must compete with other city departments for needed resources.

Despite a $3 million per year overtime budget, RFD routinely closes ('browns out') stations or units therein, almost daily. Schieve's proposal is a thinly disguised effort to seize those dedicated fire tax district tax revenues to heal the RFD's cancerous operations.

The two disastrous Caughlin Ranch wildfires destroyed or damaged more than 70 homes in Reno.

The subsequent 2019 recommendations by the City's expert, the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) for its fire department have largely been ignored, with little reform of RFD's operations or replacement of its inept leadership.

So, why should the Washoe County Commissioners follow recommendations of a failed leader like Mayor Schieve?

The Reno Mayor and City Council should clean up their own (fire) houses before attempting to destroy the well managed TMFPD and NLTFPD, whose citizens and taxpayers want no part of Reno's problems.

Mr. Daly is a resident of Washoe County served by the TMFPD. The opinions expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of Nevada News & Views.

From Tom Daly 3-6-2025: (Four station closures a month is four too many, “Brown Out” = closed)

City of Reno projects $24M budget deficit as sales tax revenues remain flat

I will have 2Q-4Q 2024 stats on RFD at months end per my public records request indicating the pace of RFD brownouts. In 2024 Reno hired 28 firefighters and lost 8 to retirement, so with a net gain of 20, the number of ‘browned out’ units declined to about 4 instances per month.

1Q 2025 stats not available until June but with no new hires and retirements, ‘brownouts’ of units or entire RFD stations likely to increase.

Note: Tom Daly is a Citizen Watchdog on Fire Issues and likely knows more details on the subject than any other non-governmental person. Unlike those in Government, he is free to express his opinions

Submitted by Thomas G. Daly December 2020 Part One

While a score of residents of Reno's Caughlin Ranch neighborhood sift thru the ashes of their homes, destroyed or damaged in the Nov. 17 Pinehaven Fire, they may be asking themselves, "Why didn't the Reno Fire Department save our house?"

Good question.

Reno Fire cannot deny it lacked notice of the potential devastation. The conditions—suspected arching power lines as the cause, homes in a wildfire hazard zone, predicted high winds and dry conditions—were the same as in the November 2011 Caughlin Ranch Fire where 28 homes were destroyed.

So, given these conditions, what did Reno Fire do differently this time? Apparently, nothing.

Multiple wildfire-at-risk neighborhoods in Washoe County now have approved "Community Wildfire Protection Plans" (CWPPs), implementing aggressive fuel reduction projects and vegetation management plans. Few, if any, neighborhoods in the city do.

If Reno Fire's recently received $80,000 Fire Prevention & Safety grant from FEMA is not helping high wildfire risk neighborhoods like Caughlin Ranch, what is Reno Fire Marshal Tray Palmer doing with that grant money?

tmfpd-wildland-fire-fuels-reduction-9-of-15trevor-bexon-700x467-8635660-6945129
A crew from the Wildland Fire Fuels Reduction Division clears brush from around NV Energy power lines in June 2020. Image: Trevor Bexon
As a contrast, Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue (TMF&R), with similar albeit much larger grants, has three hand crews working seven days a week to remove fuels from under power lines and in other high-risk environments.

TPM DALY OP-ED Part Two

On Red Flag days many fire departments re-allocate or enhance resources including moving engines and crews from low-risk central busines district stations to high-risk suburban stations, doubling or tripling their response capabilities, including roving neighborhood patrols. Some add shift crews of off-duty personnel manning reserve engines during high alert times. Los Angeles City and County fire departments do that routinely when Santa Ana winds blow there. Other jurisdictions use drones and camera/sensor systems for early wildfire warnings. But not, apparently, Reno Fire.

When a major fire strikes, an age-old fire service adage applies: what you do in the first five minutes determines what happens in the next five hours.

For the Pinehaven Fire, Reno Fire failed to call for mutual aid from other jurisdictions for 20 minutes per the incident report, an eternity during a roaring wildfire. Several Reno engines quickly reported being 'out of water', yet nearby TMF&R stations had water tenders available, only waiting to be called.

Five homes were destroyed with two dozen damaged as a result.

The culture of the Reno Fire department is not to call for help until it is too late, especially from the TMF&R department, as IAFF union Local 731 feels threatened, and Reno Fire Chief Cochran is beholden to the union.

Where is the accountability?

There are no new faces on the City Council. Don't look for the old ones to rock the boat by demanding an independent investigation of this largely avoidable disaster.

Thomas Daly is a resident of Washoe County.

This is from the Reno-IAFF Labor Control if staffing on a fire apparatus falls below the 4 person minimum. Most if not all other northern Nevada agencies do not mandate four person crews for every station, Many are routinely 3 person crews. But per the Reno's labor contract, Article 46, a perfectly good fire truck and 3 person crew are pulled from service! Note the term "in no event" not even a red flag day or if a massive fire is raging- no exception listed.

In no event shall any vacancy on an apparatus exist beyond the total three (3) hour period. Upon the end of the third hour, the apparatus shall be fully staffed or placed out of service."

Reno Fire Policy 102.08.05A Allows Reno Firefighters to use and be under the influence of illegal drugs*

*within set limits but no reference to combinations there of

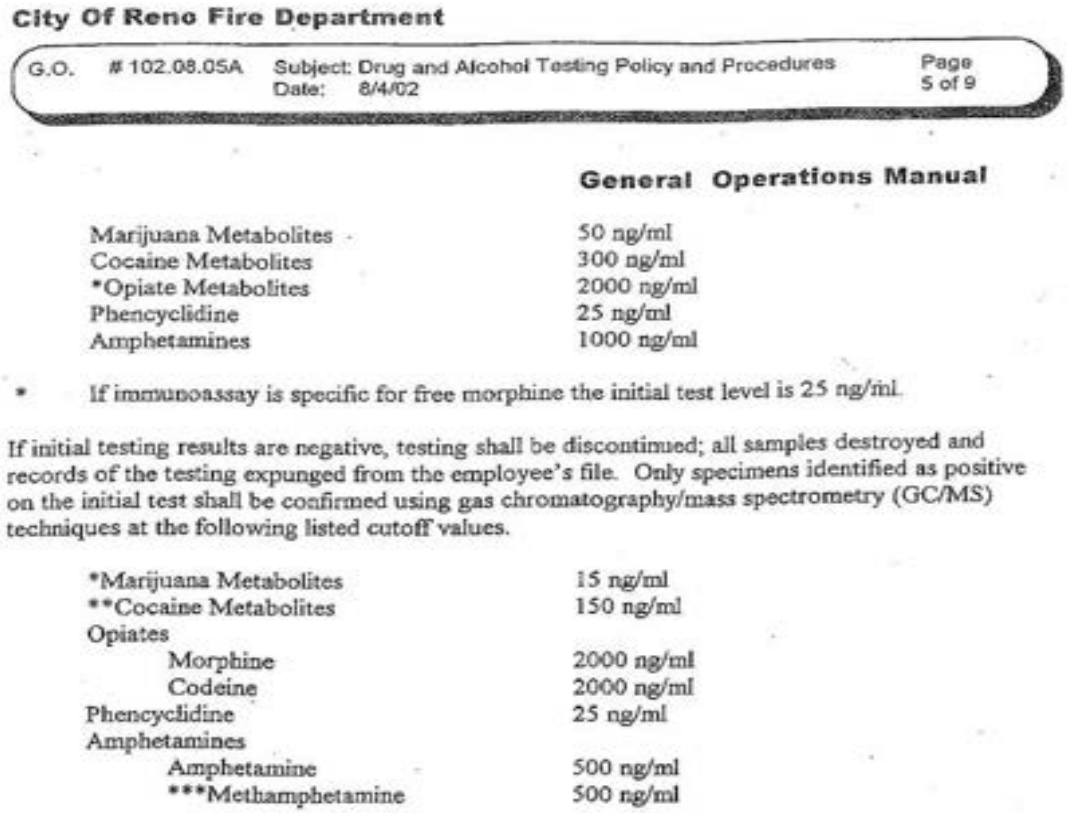
You just can't make this up!

Cocaine, fentanyl, opiates, heroin, and combinations there of!

Policy makes testing almost impossible.

A similar Citywide policy allows illegal drugs for all City Employees including cops!

Read for yourself.



City Of Reno Fire Department

G.O. # 102.08.05A Subject: Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy and Procedures Page 5 of 9
Date: 8/4/02

General Operations Manual

Marijuana Metabolites	50 ng/ml
Cocaine Metabolites	300 ng/ml
*Opiate Metabolites	2000 ng/ml
Phencyclidine	25 ng/ml
Amphetamines	1000 ng/ml

* If immunoassay is specific for free morphine the initial test level is 25 ng/ml.

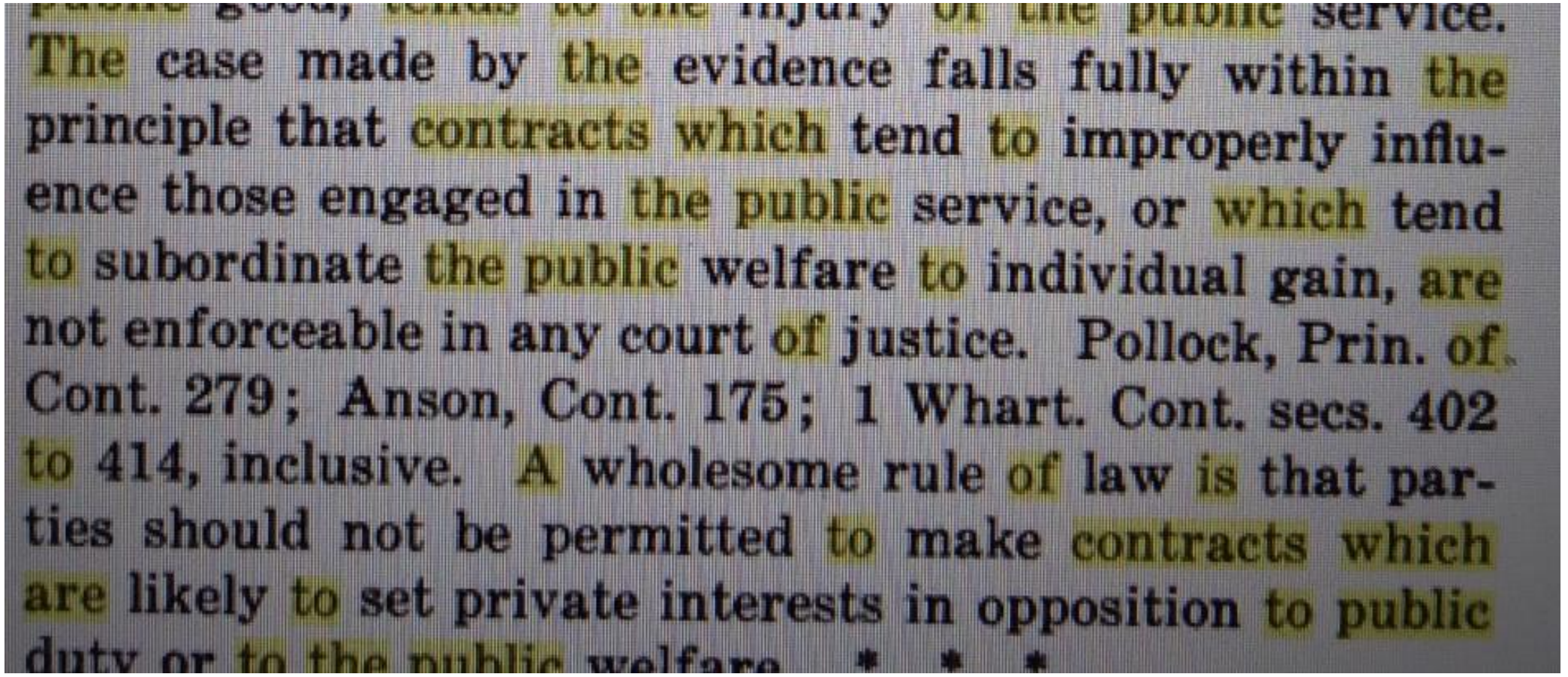
If initial testing results are negative, testing shall be discontinued; all samples destroyed and records of the testing expunged from the employee's file. Only specimens identified as positive on the initial test shall be confirmed using gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) techniques at the following listed cutoff values.

*Marijuana Metabolites	15 ng/ml
**Cocaine Metabolites	150 ng/ml
Opiates	
Morphine	2000 ng/ml
Codeine	2000 ng/ml
Phencyclidine	25 ng/ml
Amphetamines	
Amphetamine	500 ng/ml
***Methamphetamine	500 ng/ml

Contracts that violate public safety are Void! It is well-settled that "[a]ll contracts the purpose of which is to create a situation which tends to operate to the detriment of the public interest are against public policy and void…" W. Cab Co. v. Kellar, 90 Nev. 240, 245, 523 P.2d 842, 845 (1974). Contracts which violate the law are void as against public policy. Int'l Ass'n of Firefighters, Local #1285 v. Las Vegas, 104 Nev. 615, 621, 764 P.2d 478, 481 (1988) ("Contracts that violate such ordinances are void and against public policy."); State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. Hinkel, 87 Nev. 478, 484, 488 P.2d 1151, 1154 (1971) ("If a contract of insurance is at variance with the statutory requirement, it is against public policy and void."); Gaston v. Drake, 14 Nev. 175, 181 (1879) ("a contract will not be enforced if it is against public policy, or that, if a part of the consideration of an entire contract is illegal as against public policy…"). (Legal Opinion in another matter)

Nevada Constitution:
Section. 1. Inalienable rights. All men are by Nature free and equal and have certain inalienable rights among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty; Acquiring, Possessing and Protecting property and pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness[.]
Sec: 2. Purpose of government; paramount allegiance to United States. All political power is inherent in the people[.] Government is instituted for the protection, security and benefit of the people; and they have the right to alter or reform the same whenever the public good may require it.

Where Are The lawyers or Our Elected Representatives?



public service.
The case made by the evidence falls fully within the principle that contracts which tend to improperly influence those engaged in the public service, or which tend to subordinate the public welfare to individual gain, are not enforceable in any court of justice. Pollock, Prin. of Cont. 279; Anson, Cont. 175; 1 Whart. Cont. secs. 402 to 414, inclusive. A wholesome rule of law is that parties should not be permitted to make contracts which are likely to set private interests in opposition to public

Did You Know that Most Human Caused Fires are Caused by Homeless?

Est over 50%

Homeless pose a serious danger to themselves and others:

https://www.rgj.com › story › news › 2019 –

When firefighters arrived at the scene, they found the body inside a burned-up tent at a homeless encampment along the Truckee River.

"Fire officials say a cooking fire at a homeless camp appears to have started last month's Sullivan Fire behind Hug High School." In 2021 there were 386 homeless related fires just in Reno.
So in 2024 what are the overall stats with Washoe, Reno and Sparks?

In 2024 as homes were severely threatened and some burned, Washoe Commission Chair Alexis Hill (D) escorted Democrat Candidate Tim Walz into the active fire scene and command area for a photo op. You can see for yourself.

Solutions?
In 2014 we had a "Blue Ribbon Commission" to Study the Issue Regionally
There findings are largely applicable today and unfulfilled
Here is a summary:

Key Findings (Greatly edited but to see the full report):
https://www.washoecounty.gov/bcc/board_committees/2015/files/agendas/2015-05-26sm/5-6-7.pdf

• Fire jurisdictional boundaries are Inefficient – …The jurisdictional boundaries are unnecessary limitations to service delivery, often slowing response from the closest unit. And, the neighboring agency unit which is physically closest is often not dispatched due to limitations in automatic and mutual aid agreements. The BRC believes the community expectation is to send the closest resource regardless of jurisdiction.

• Staffing and risk/cost are disconnected – Staffing levels do not comply with national consensus standards (NFPA 1710) and/or are not sustainable. There is a lack of balance between "acceptable level of risk" and an "acceptable cost of protection," and the community is not adequately educated to make an informed decision about striking that balance on a community-by-community basis or regionally.

• Efficiency and effectiveness are sacrificed for local control – Redundancy and duplication are evident with each agency maintaining its own administrative and support infrastructure.

• Volunteers are a key component of emergency services in several areas where insufficient tax base exists to support career staff. That will continue to be true in a regional model as well. However, volunteer organizations in Washoe County are fragmented and inefficient on many levels and are in need of reform.
*NOTE: Reno PROHIBITS Volunteers to the detriment of public safety!

• Personnel and labor agreements can negate efficiencies – Some current collective bargaining agreements have language compelling the employer to negotiate any impacts or effects of consolidation, merger or contracts for service. This positions the bargaining units to "cherry-pick" the best components from each collective bargaining agreement in an integration initiative, potentially offsetting efficiencies gained in other areas or rendering the resulting regional agency **unsustainable.**

And here is the biggest take away, ignored after 10 years:

The BRC strongly believes that an independent regional fire department governed by an autonomous board, free of political grandstanding and in-fighting is the ultimate answer and therefore the ultimate goal.
The county should lead the way of regional collaboration
by starting small and working toward larger collaboration efforts with other agencies.

Fixing the Serious Life Threatening Problem?

Fixing this is extremely unlikely absent divine intervention or legal action.

Legal experts should look at all aspects of the Reno contract including the ‘Consolidation” clause and many others and the Drug Policy. Look at the (Gaston) Public Safety Doctrine and the Nevada Constitution please.

Legislative Action is highly unlikely but is needed.

The logical thought is that the County supplies the services countywide including in the cities or that the State of Nevada do so.

So many moving parts from fire to emergency response, all have to agree, lawsuits that certainly would spring up, cots, funding, eliminating the TMFPD tax areas, and so much more.

The only solution that WatchdogJeff sees is if the courts stepped in under the concept if public safety and were able to order some change. Updated 3-6-2025