The Nevada Legislature meets every two years

Consists of 63 members (42 Assembly members, 21 Senators)

Between sessions, members have no district or personal staff—1 secretary for 6 months during session
The Constituent Services Unit (CSU) formed in 1999 in response to demand by legislators for additional assistance.

Volume of constituent-related calls became difficult to handle for analysts and committee staff during legislative session.

One person very good at quick turn-around requests assigned—now the manager of the unit.

CSU staff during legislative sessions: 14 (including support staff), with 12 in Carson City and 2 in Las Vegas.
Intake Process

- Session years: about 80 percent of requests from legislators
- 20 percent transfers from State Operator, referred from main Research Division, cold calls/e-mails from the public
- Non Session years: 60% legislator 40% other
- Sources: Legislators, e-mails to our division’s generic e-mail, Research Library, State Operator, cold calls
- Enter into Database, allows for mail-merge mass responses if needed
- Nearly entire process is electronic, including editing
What services are provided?

In general, CSU provides:

- Assistance to legislators concerning constituents who write or call with problems or questions
- Information for legislative constituents regarding the Legislature and state government
- Assistance to constituents in resolving matters with government agencies (federal, state, and local)
- Meeting with constituent groups
Products include:

- Letters
- E-mail responses (can send as though it is coming directly from Legislator’s e-mail)
- Telephone calls
- Speeches and talking points
- Newsletter articles
- Letters of recommendation or nomination
- Proclamations and various other items
Level of Service

- Everything from assisting legislator’s session personal secretaries with designing form letter replies, to something resembling case work (requiring release forms, etc.)

- While we can provide general information about the state law, persons seeking legal advice are advised to contact an attorney
Resources

- Personal contacts within agencies
- Various ombudsmen offices at state and local level
- CSU compiles its own services directory for Las Vegas and surrounding county
Challenges

- Often, the constituent cannot be helped further
- Separating requests for policy information versus true constituent assistance
- The usual challenges for legislative staff:
  - Communication issues
  - Deadlines
  - Separating political campaigning from standard legislator duties
Best Practices

- Internal “Wiki” pages – recurring subjects including:
  - Budget & Taxes
  - Common Interest Communities (H.O.A.s)
  - Concealed Weapons/Firearms
  - Elections including Ballot Measures
  - Foreclosure/Home Financing Issues
  - Health Care and Health Care Reform

- Resource bank – Allows for quick turn-around of basic information requests on popular topics