



Lawmakers pass the pork

AMANDA FEHD (online@rgj.com)

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

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The Nevada Legislature approved \$20 million in so-called "pork" spending late Monday, including funding for autism, homeless and food bank programs.

With a limited amount of extra funds available, the Senate and Assembly each were allowed \$10 million to allot to special programs.

Lawmakers, including mayors from throughout the state, had sought \$20 million just for homeless programs, but in the end were only able to get \$1 million.

Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie, D-Reno, was the main sponsor of the homeless measure. Leslie participated in a tent city event in February, joining with other lawmakers and homeless advocates who spent a snowy night in boxes and tents on the Legislature's lawn.

A request for \$6.4 million to battle autism in Nevada was reduced to \$2 million.

Autism advocates, including first lady Dawn Gibbons and teenager Cliff Schumacher, had pushed for the funding to help families with autistic children pay for treatment, which can cost more than \$45,000 a year.

The spending bills were opposed by several Republicans, including Sens. Bob Beers and Joe Heck, and Assemblymen Ty Cobb, Bob Beers and Chad Christensen.

Other special spending projects approved by lawmakers included:

- \$2 million to the Nevada Autism Task Force.
- \$1.2 million to subsidize health insurance premiums for small businesses.
- \$1.2 million to the Nevada Alliance Boys and Girls Clubs and the Nevada Public Education Foundation.
- \$1 million to the Housing Division of the Department of Business and Industry to provide grants for employer-assisted housing programs.
- \$1 million to Three Square to build a food production facility.
- \$750,000 to the Nevada Fire Safe Council for a wildfire threat reduction program.
- \$500,000 to assist uninsured people to enroll in health insurance programs.
- \$425,000 for auditing child welfare agencies.
- \$160,000 to create a Web site to provide consumers with pricing information on prescription drugs.

-- \$250,000 to the state's conservation districts.