

**Deonne E. Contine,** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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January 31, 2019

Alora Bartosz, Executive Assistant  
Nevada Department of Agriculture  
405 South 21st Street  
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Re: Director of Department of Agriculture Position

Dear Ms. Bartosz:

With the utmost enthusiasm, I would like to express my interest in serving as the Director of the Department of Agriculture. My strong commitment to public service, work ethic, and leadership skills make me an ideal candidate. In evaluating me as a candidate, here is what I can immediately offer to this position:

**The ability to quickly adapt to and succeed at new challenges:** In June of 2007, I began my career at the Attorney General's office after practicing law for less than a year. Within a few months, I took on a case that had been decided against my client, the State health insurance plan ("PEBP"), and which needed to be appealed immediately to the Nevada Supreme Court. The case needed timely resolution because local government retirees were joining PEBP, but some local governments were challenging the statutory requirement to pay PEBP for their coverage. In September, I requested the Supreme Court expedite the matter. By Thanksgiving the case was fully briefed. In January, I argued before the Nevada Supreme Court and in March, the Supreme Court reversed the District Court decision against my client.

Similarly, when I began representing the Nevada Department of Taxation as an attorney in 2008, I knew very little about the tax structure in this state. Nevertheless, I dove right into the new challenge, learning about state and local taxation and winning two tax related cases appealed to the Nevada Supreme Court along the way. In 2012, the Department Director asked me to join his staff. In 2014, I was appointed as Director of the Department of Taxation by Governor Sandoval.

**A strong leader and strategic thinker:** Within a few months of joining the Department of Taxation, I realized that there was an imbalance of human resources statewide in the Compliance Division and that existing organizational structure left taxpayers with a lack of assistance and inconsistent decisions. In order to align our human resources with the Department's larger organization mission (i.e. improving taxpayer compliance through education, information and enforcement and promoting the fair and equitable treatment of taxpayers), I proposed a reorganization of leadership structure and reallocation of human resources that was supported by staff, approved by the Director and implemented within 6 months. This was not without resistance from the Northern staff because manager positions were moved to Southern Nevada. As we proceeded, I met regularly with staff members to assuage

fears and to explain the rationale behind the reorganization and to explain how the reallocation of resources would better serve the state and would ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency – in turn making their jobs better.

A few years later, I was Director of the Department as it grew from approximately 336 full time equivalents to over 380 FTEs. My budget grew from \$27 million to over \$42 million a year for that same period. This growth was due to additional programs and responsibilities of the Department. In 2015, a new business tax was enacted (“Commerce Tax”). After its enactment, the Department facilitated the regulatory process where any concerns and the detail of implementation would be addressed. I developed relationships to ensure inclusion of different perspectives (i.e. small business versus big business) and built consensus through a fairly charged regulatory process to get to an outcome that not everyone (maybe not anyone) was happy with, but one that all felt their concerns were considered and resolved to the extent they could be under the law. One of the biggest critics of the Commerce Tax, the Nevada Retail Association, praised my efforts in a private thank you note after the regulations were adopted. In the note, they noted that the process to implement the Commerce Tax was fair, inclusive and sought to consider and balance many competing interests.

Just after the first Commerce Tax return was due, Question 2 (taxation and regulation of adult-use marijuana) was adopted by initiative in November 2016. The Governor and Legislature were anxious to have that additional revenue as soon as possible. Under my leadership, the Department has been nationally recognized for the smooth implementation of its adult-use marijuana program that allowed for licensing and legal sales to begin on July 1, 2017 which was six months earlier than required by the initiative petition.

**A passion for public service:** My passion for public service has driven almost all of my career decisions over the last 20 years. While I have had brief stints in the private sector during my professional career, I have always been drawn back to the public sector – mostly because of my desire to do work that feels meaningful and rewarding and that serves a greater purpose (I left my job at Taxation to run as the Assembly Caucus endorsed candidate for the Nevada Legislature where I had hoped to continue my public service). I think public sector work is important and that people who are truly passionate about it can make systems and processes more efficient, effective and fair. As a member of Governor Sandoval’s cabinet, I took very seriously my role in serving in his administration and in protecting the interests of the people of Nevada. As a Deputy in the Attorney General’s office, I fought to make sure our state’s health plan was whole and I litigated to protect the state’s revenue structure.

In conclusion, I am a public servant at heart, and I promise that I would contribute the same skill and commitment and use the experiences I have gained over the course of my public service career to fulfilling the duties of the Director of the Department of Agriculture.

Sincerely,  
/s/  
Deonne E. Contine

Deonne E. Contine, [REDACTED]  
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Education: *Boyd School of Law*, University of Nevada Las Vegas • Juris Doctorate  
*University of California, Berkeley* • AB, Political Science

License: *Nevada State Bar No. 9552*

Professional Experience:

- March – December of 2018
  - **Attorney** - I worked as an attorney in the private sector for Kaempfer Crowell and WSCC, Inc. My practice focused on administrative law, regulatory matters, cannabis and liquor issues, state and local taxation (SALT) and related litigation.

*Nevada Department of Taxation, Carson City, NV, July 2012-February 2018*

**Executive Director** (November 2014-February 2018)

- Directed agency with 380 FTEs and budget of \$42 million a year. Agency organized into 5 Sections: 1) Fiscal/Administrative Services; 2) Compliance; 3) Excise Tax and Regulation; 4) Local Government Services; and 5) Information Technology
- Directly reported to Governor's office and served in Governor's Cabinet
- Regularly communicated with the Governor and his leadership staff on tax, regulatory, and other agency issues
- Regularly interacted with and communicated with taxpayers
- Responded to both individual Legislators and legislative staff on tax, regulatory and agency issues
- Served as lead staff for the Nevada Tax Commission, an eight-member board appointed by the Governor to hear taxpayer disputes, adopt regulations and perform other duties required by statute.
- Oversaw staff response or responded myself to media inquiries
- Regularly appeared before the Nevada Legislature where I: presented and defended the Department's budget requests; presented the State's Tax Expenditure Report; gave numerous training presentations explaining the various tax types and how the Department collects and distributes money; and provided other information on taxes and regulatory issues in Nevada. I presented and testified on the Department's legislation and testified on other tax and regulatory issues.
- In 2015, I was part of the Executive leadership team throughout the Legislative session working on the legislation that became the Commerce Tax.
- In 2017, I was part of the Executive leadership team in all legislation regarding the regulation and taxation of marijuana.
- Oversaw implementation of the Commerce Tax including, drafting, working with interest groups and presenting regulations.

- Oversaw the implementation of Question 2, The Initiative to Regulate and Tax Marijuana including:
  - Co-Chaired Governor’s Task Force on the Implementation of Question 2
    - Led Task Force meetings
    - Appointed working group members from local governments, public safety and public health agencies, industry and the general public to discuss and provide recommendations regarding implementation
    - Reviewed, revised and approved Task Force Report to the Governor
    - Provided information and made presentations to Legislative committees regarding legislation regarding marijuana
- Dealt with the day to day implementation including working with interest groups, legislative branch and other executives staff agencies to efficiently and effectively create a tightly regulated and respected structure to implement the will of the voters.
- Final Agency mediator for employee disputes
- Worked with staff, State Personnel division and AG’s office on employee grievances and other complaints as provided in NRS/NAC Chapter 284.
- Regularly communicated to staff in writing (group and individual) to motivate and to inform about agency/state happenings/challenges to alleviate anxiety, etc.
- Provide employee incentives for exemplary reviews, positive taxpayer feedback and going above and beyond. I would send with hand written note recognizing their contributions
- Manage, support and motivate staff during implementation of new tax and regulatory programs often prior to any additional staff being allocated
- Manage transition of Department of Public and Behavioral Health staff into Department of Taxation after statutory change combining program responsibilities. Spearheaded challenge of blending agency cultures, expectations, etc.
- Conduct performance evaluations reviews with direct reports; drafted format for, facilitated, and discussed direct report self-evaluations
- Enhanced training budget to provide staff with professional development; implemented training program where professional development was shared with other staff

**Chief Deputy Executive Director (October 2013 – November 2014)**

Directly reported to the Director and oversaw and supported agency divisions

- Approved, reviewed and drafted Regulations;
- Prepared bill draft requests and presented Department’s legislation;
- Oversaw publication of the Nevada Tax Expenditure Report;
- Approved, reviewed and presented Technical Bulletins to the Nevada Tax Commission;
- Reviewed, revised and approved Advisory Opinions on requests from taxpayers;
- Determined agency action on Administrative Cases;

- Ensured efficient flow and completion of taxpayer disputes; and
- Provided oversight on administrative, budget and fiscal matters.
- Frequent in person communication with staff regarding workload, challenges in order to support them with resources to be most effective in their jobs.
- Draft, review and revise work performance standards for new positions or for position adjustments as needed
- Final sign off on agency-wide regulatory required performance evaluations
- Regularly reviewed and evaluated process to ensure efficiencies and looked for opportunities to increase effectiveness of programs while maintaining or reducing costs
- Facilitated cross division sections communication and collaboration

**Deputy Executive Director /Compliance Division (July 2012-September 2013)**

- Led the second largest Division with approximately 150 FTEs
- Analyzed need for, developed plan and implemented Compliance Division reorganization
- Assisted or led on many of the items of the Chief Deputy position

***Office of the Attorney General, Carson City, NV June 2007- July 2012***

During my 5 years at the Attorney General's office, I had the following reported cases before the Nevada Supreme Court in which I obtained reversals of District Court decisions that were issued against my client.

Reported Cases:

*Department of Taxation v. Chrysler Group LLC*, 300 P.3d 713 (Nev. 2013)  
*Department of Taxation v. American Home Shield*, 254 P.3d 601 (Nev. 2011)  
*PEBP v. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department*, 124 Nev. 138 (2008)

**Senior Deputy Attorney General (October 2008-July 2012)**

- I represented the Nevada Department of Taxation
  - Presented cases and appeared before the Department's Hearing officers, the Nevada Tax Commission and in State courts
  - Advised the agency on day to day legal issues, and
  - Worked on other legal issues as needed, including drafting language for legislation and regulations.
- I served as Commission Counsel to the Real Estate, Appraiser and Common Interest Community Commissions from 2007-2012.
  - Advised the Commissions on the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law and legal and evidentiary issues related to their statutory responsibilities.

**Deputy Attorney General (June 2007-October 2008)**

- I represented the state health plan, the Public Employees' Benefits Program ("PEBP"), and served as Board counsel to the PEBP Board.
  - Advised the agency on day to day legal issues and litigated agency disputes;
  - Advised the Board on the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law and legal issues related to their statutory responsibilities.

***Newman Morris & Dachelet, Las Vegas, NV, November 2006 – June 2007***

**Attorney**

- General civil litigation practice focused on breach of contract cases related to real estate transactions, commercial construction contracts, and general civil and commercial disputes

***Eighth Judicial District Court, Las Vegas, NV, August 2005 – August 2006***

**Law Clerk to the Honorable Valerie P. Adair**

- Provided assistance and counsel to the judge in making legal determinations and in writing orders by researching issues and drafting bench memorandums.

Deonne E. Contine: Contact Information for Professional References

Mike Willden  
Former Chief of Staff  
Governor Brian Sandoval

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Jim DeVolld  
Chairman, Nevada Tax Commission

[REDACTED] (cell phone)  
[REDACTED]

Jorge Pupo  
Deputy Director, Nevada Department of Taxation

[REDACTED] (Jorge work direct line)  
[REDACTED] (cell phone)

Deane Albright, CPA  
Owner and Treasurer of WSCC, Inc.

[REDACTED] (cell phone)  
[REDACTED]

Chris Nielsen  
General Counsel  
Nevada PERS

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Gina Session  
Former Chief Deputy Attorney General

[REDACTED] (cell phone)  
[REDACTED]

## Deonne E. Contine Supplemental Questions

1. Describe your experience in the food and agriculture industry (livestock, crops, pests, food manufacturing, etc.).

I was the Director of the Department of Taxation from late 2014 to early 2018. I led the agency that regulated the growing, manufacturing, testing and retail sale of cannabis plants.

2. Describe your experience in regulating food and agriculture.

I was the Director of the Department of Taxation from late 2014 to early 2018. I led the agency that regulated the growing, manufacturing, testing and retail sale of cannabis plants. As such, I oversaw the implementation of the legal marijuana program including the regulation of independent testing labs and marijuana cultivation facilities. I chaired the Governor's Task Force and worked with Department of Agriculture staff and leadership in that capacity.

I also worked with agriculture interests on the agricultural sales tax exemption, including drafting a technical advisory opinion that was adopted by the Nevada Tax Commission.

3. Describe your experience in applying policy.

As part of the leadership team at the Department of Taxation from 2012-2018, I have regularly appeared before the Nevada Legislature where I: presented and defended the Department's budget requests; presented the State's Tax Expenditure Report; gave numerous training presentations explaining various tax types and how the Department collects and distributes money; and provided other policy information on taxes and regulatory issues in Nevada. I presented and testified on the Department's legislation and testified on other tax and regulatory policy issues.

From 2015, I was part of the Executive leadership team throughout the Legislative session working on the legislation that became the Commerce Tax. I testified in hearings on the policy implications of the proposed legislation and responded to countless requests for information regarding the implications of the new tax. I then oversaw the implementation of the Commerce Tax program where further policy implications were fleshed out and drafted, reviewed and had regulations related to the implementation adopted.

In 2017, I was part of the Executive leadership team in all legislation regarding the regulation and taxation of marijuana. I oversaw the implementation of Question 2, The Initiative to Regulate and Tax Marijuana.

I also analyzed, reviewed and interpreted as needed the policy of the following statutory/regulatory provisions. I also drafted guidance and provided policy information to the public.

From 2008-2018: NRS Chapters related to Revenue and Taxation including: NRS Chapters 360-377C, NRS Chapter 680B, NRS Chapters 453A and 453D 2013-2018,



From 2012-2018 Provisions related to Public Financial Administration including NRS Chapters 353C, 354 and 356.

From mid 2007-2008, I dealt with issues related to the State employees' health care benefits (NRS Chapter 287)

From 2007-2008, I also advised clients at the AG's office on various issues covering a wide range of statutory provisions.

From 2007-2018, advised clients while at the AG' office and dealt with issues related to the State's personnel policies (NRS Chapter 284)

4. Describe your experience in public administration.

I was a member of the Department of Taxation's leadership team for over 5 ½ years. From November 2014-February 2018, I directed the Nevada Department of Taxation – an agency with over 380a FTEs and a budget of \$42 million a year. The agency is organized into 5 Sections: 1) Fiscal/Administrative Services; 2) Compliance; 3) Excise Tax and Regulation; 4) Local Government Services; and 5) Information Technology. I was appointed by the Governor and lead staff to an 8-member board that heard taxpayer disputes and reviewed and adopted agency policy and regulations. The Department also staffs the State Board of Equalization and the Committee on Local Government Finance. I reported directly to the Governor's Chief of Staff and served in the Governor's Cabinet. From July 2012, I led the Compliance Division – the second largest Division with agency - approximately 150 FTEs. During that time, I also, analyzed need for, developed a plan and implemented a Compliance Division reorganization. The Department administers about 20 different tax and regulatory programs.

5. Describe your experience in accounting and/or fiscal management.

During my time at Taxation, I provided oversight on administrative, budget and fiscal matters. For over 3 years, I led the collection and distribution of \$6 billion in revenue annually to state and local taxation. The agency grew from approximately 336 full time equivalents (FTEs) to over 380 FTEs. My budget grew from \$27 million to over \$42 million a year for that same period. This growth was due to additional programs and responsibilities of the Department.

I was involved in the preparation of the biennial budget, presented the budget to the Executive branch and defended it before the Nevada Legislature. I also appeared before the Nevada Interim Finance Committee.

6. Describe your experience in business administration.

For a year (1999) , I worked in a small business in which my brother was a partial owner and CEO. I was the Office Manager/Deputy to the CEO.

7. Describe your leadership philosophy.

I have built my career and my reputation on competence, collaboration, honesty and a strong work ethic. I have served the state with its best interest at the forefront and with the deepest level of integrity and authenticity. I have a high standard for leadership both in myself and in those I serve. I believe in the following:

Lead by example: I try to show up with a sense of purpose, work hard, learn, analyze, and be decisive. Reanalyze and always work at making whatever you do better. I would never approach my boss with a problem for which I did not have a solution (or had attempted to solve). I believe in supporting those I lead to do the same.

Fair and supportive: I try to promote the idea that we are all in this together. I believe in supporting teams with tools, resources if available, feedback and advice to be successful. I also try to understand the barriers that employees face in completing their jobs.

Respect and recognition: In the public sector this could often just be a small recognition or a token of gratitude. As Director of Taxation, I would send a personal note with a Starbucks' card to recognize employees – especially those on the front lines who interfaced with the public.

Accountability: Both for myself and for my staff: I believe in addressing problems as they occur. I try to make sure that expectations are clear and achievable so that accountability is not a burden or surprise.

8. Describe your supervisory background.

Below is a summary of my supervisory duties during my 5 ½ years at the Nevada Department of Taxation

- Final Agency mediator for employee disputes
- Worked with staff, State Personnel division and AG's office on employee grievances and other complaints as provided in NRS/NAC Chapter 284.
- Frequent in person communication with staff regarding workload and challenges in order to support them with resources to be most effective in their jobs.
- Regularly communicated to staff in writing (group and individual) to motivate and to inform about agency/state happenings/challenges to alleviate anxiety, etc.
- Provide employee incentives (\$5 Starbucks cards I paid for myself) for exemplary reviews, positive taxpayer feedback and going above and beyond. I would send with hand written note recognizing their contributions
- Manage, support and motivate staff during implementation of new tax and regulatory programs often prior to any additional staff being allocated
- Manage transition of Department of Public and Behavioral Health staff into Department of Taxation after statutory change combining program responsibilities. Spearheaded challenge of blending agency cultures, expectations, etc.

- Conduct performance evaluations reviews with direct reports; drafted format for, facilitated, and discussed direct report self-evaluations
- Draft, review and revise work performance standards for new positions or for position adjustments as needed
- As Chief Deputy, I was the final sign off on agency-wide regulatory required performance evaluations
- Enhanced training budget to provide staff with professional development; implemented training program where professional development was shared with other staff
- Regularly reviewed and evaluated process to ensure efficiencies and looked for opportunities to increase effectiveness of programs while maintaining or reducing costs
- Analyzed need for, developed plan and implemented Compliance Division reorganization
- Facilitated cross division sections communication and collaboration.