

Rogich: Time for Nevada to address collective bargaining

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY — Long-time Republican political consultant Sig Rogich said the 2013 Nevada Legislature has to take a serious look at collective bargaining reforms so that situations like the impending layoff of hundreds of Clark County teachers can be avoided in the future.

“I think we’ve got to look at collective bargaining in a real way in this legislative session,” he said. “We’ve got to stop some of these nonsensical things that are going on. You can’t tell me that it’s good government or good policy to lay off 1,200 teachers down here when you’ve got to stop a pay increase to do so.

“And I don’t think their fellow teachers agree that that’s the right thing to do as well,” Rogich said. “But this teachers union has dug its heels in to the detriment of those they represent.”

Rogich, interviewed on the Nevada NewsMakers television program, was referring to the layoffs anticipated in the Clark County School District as a result of a binding arbitration decision requiring the district to provide pay raises to teachers.

The school district lost an arbitration battle worth \$63 million over teacher salary increases for education level and longevity. The district says the decision will force as many as 1,000 teacher layoffs unless money can be found to reduce the number.

Rogich said he believes there is a disconnect between the teachers union and teachers themselves.

Rogich, who was involved in the campaigns of Ronald Reagan and both Bush presidents, also weighed in on the national and Nevada political scenes.

Of presumptive GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, Rogich said his campaign needs to do more to tell voters how he would run the presidency differently from President Obama in order to attract independent voters in November.

The average voter might describe Romney as a Mormon, a successful businessman, governor of Massachusetts or mention his work on the Salt Lake City Olympics, he said.

"To get independent voters to look at him seriously they are going to have to offer reasonable alternatives and differences between the way he would run the presidency as president and what President Obama is doing," Rogich said.

Romney will do well in Nevada with a strong turnout expected from the Mormon community on his behalf, he said.

"I think that it's going to be very competitive in Nevada," Rogich said.

He also expressed no objections to the amount of third party money in the presidential campaign.

"Why shouldn't people be overwhelmed by TV commercials that have messages that are important for them to know about," Rogich asked. "What does it harm as long as you disclose it fully and you play by the rules?"

On the race between Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., Rogich said it is a tight race but that it is Heller's to lose because Romney should run strong in Nevada.

Rogich was also asked about the state Senate race between Sen. Greg Brower, R-Reno, and former state Sen. Sheila Leslie, a Democrat, in Washoe County. The Senate 15 race is one of five in Nevada expected to determine which party controls the

Senate in 2013.

Rogich said Leslie has to be the favorite, given her long track record of successful campaigns.

But Brower is extremely capable and cannot be counted out, he said.