

George J. Chanos – Republican (Appointed)
31st Nevada Attorney General
Term: November 2, 2005–January 1, 2007

Biography

George James Chanos, born in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, on August 3, 1958, spent his childhood between Wisconsin and Las Vegas. Chanos, a member of the high school debate team, graduated from Valley High School in Las Vegas.

In 1980, he served as President of the Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and in 1981, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. After completing his undergraduate degree, he served as an intern in then-United States Senator Paul Laxalt's office for six months.

The path that led Chanos to one of Nevada's highest governmental posts began in his early childhood.

When Chanos was five or six years old, [President] John Kennedy was assassinated, "and I was in the car with my mother", Chanos said. "I will never forget that moment when it came over the radio. My mother pulled the car to the side of the road and started to cry. And it had an impact on me. So I watched the television coverage that occurred afterward about the assassination and I learned about politics . . . for the first time. It just intrigued me as something that was important and that this man was important and that people loved this man, and so I wanted to be like this man when I was very young."¹

In 1985, Chanos graduated from the University of San Diego School of Law with a Juris Doctorate degree. He worked as a business litigator in the San Diego office of a 700+ attorney firm, and developed his skills as a young lawyer by practicing against lawyers from some of the nation's top law firms.

In the early 1990s, inspired by the success of the game Trivial Pursuits, Chanos took a break from practicing law in order to produce and market a moderately successful trivia board game, Notable Quotables, which is based on identifying quotations by famous people. With an infusion of cash from billionaire investor Alex Spanos, owner of the San Diego Chargers football team, Chanos produced 50,000 copies of the game.

'I had collected quotes as a hobby, and I decided that if there was a national fad that could be created out of trivia that there was probably a fairly strong pre-existing market for quotations,' Chanos said, 'but I knew it couldn't be your run-

¹ *Las Vegas Sun*. Kanigher, Steve. "Who is George Chanos? – The Man". January 15, 2006.

of-the-mill quotations. The quotations would have to be witty, profound, outrageous, something very compelling about the quotations to make a board game.²

In 1995, Chanos and his wife, Adriana Escobar Chanos, whom he first met in kindergarten and started dating in college, moved back to Las Vegas where they opened a joint law practice. While building their own firm, Chanos ultimately developed a business litigation and transactional practice and became a recognized authority in negotiation and dispute resolution, participating in the Harvard Negotiation Project and lecturing to other lawyers.

In 1998, their daughter Alexandra was born. Adriana, a former deputy city attorney in San Diego, also served as a member of the Nevada Taxicab Authority Board and the Nevada Public Utilities Commission. Later, she was named Nevada's consumer advocate but resigned when her husband became Attorney General.

In the early 2000's, Governor Kenny Guinn appointed Chanos to fill the final two years of Brian Sandoval's term as attorney general.³ Four months after his appointment as the state's top lawyer, Chanos said, "[I] just wasn't cut out for politics."⁴ About 13 months later, despite a five to one fundraising advantage over his opponent, he announced he would finish his term but wouldn't run for the office because he "wanted to spend more time with his family".⁵ In commenting for this biography, Chanos stated, "the truth is that I loved the work but I hated the politics. Politics has become an exceedingly toxic, polarized, and dysfunctional environment. It's not for me. I will continue to serve, but not as an elected official."

As Attorney General, Chanos involved himself in the defense of state's rights. In December 2005, Chanos declared invalid a new state law aimed at giving Nevadans the opportunity to buy lower-cost drugs from Canada. Although he personally supported the need for low cost prescription drugs, he determined that the law passed by the Nevada legislature, on that subject, was fundamentally flawed because it required imported drugs to be approved by the FDA, when the FDA had specifically indicated that Canadian drugs were "not FDA approved". Canadian drugs are actually approved only by the Canadian government. He wrote an opinion which asserted that state law, which permitted residents to purchase lower-cost prescription drugs from Canada, "[presented] insurmountable legal obstacles to the importation of virtually any drugs from Canada."⁶

In March 2006, Chanos opposed efforts by the federal government to ship high-level nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain. In August 2006, the U.S. District Court in Reno rejected the appeal.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. "Lawyer takes rewarding step from politics to jewelry maker". January 1, 2011.

⁴ *Nevada Appeal*. Smith, John L. "Chanos' reasons for dropping out unbelievable—if not unreal". March 15, 2006.

⁵ *Las Vegas Sun*. Kanigher, Steve. "Who is George Chanos? – The Man". January 15, 2006.

⁶ *Reno Gazette-Journal*. Damon. December 28, 2005.

Chanos also supported voter-approved marijuana for medicinal purposes over the objections of the federal government. He also supported a proposal to split up the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to separate Nevada from the same appellate court that has jurisdiction over California.

On November 1, 2006, Chanos successfully argued the case of *Whorton v. Bockting*, 549 U.S. 406 (2007), before the U.S. Supreme Court. Justice Alito delivered the opinion for a unanimous Court.

After finishing his two-year appointment as Attorney General, Chanos realized that he no longer wanted a life in politics and turned to other interests. Shortly thereafter, his marriage with Adriana ended in divorce. They remain close friends. Adriana now is a District Court judge.

In 2008, Chanos joined Capriottis Sandwich Shop, Inc. as a major stockholder and Chairman of the Board of Directors. From 2008 to 2018, Chanos helped the company grow from 40 stores to over 100 stores, now operating in 19 states.

In November 2012, Chanos suffered a major heart attack—a life-altering incident that inspired him to write a motivational book for Millennials, *Seize Your Destiny: A Roadmap to Success. Choices That Lead to a Happy, Successful and Meaningful Life*. The book, which began as a letter to his daughter, explains what is happening in the world and prepares readers for what is ahead. He currently is working on a second, motivational book for Millennials, *Millennial Samurai* that will be published in 2018. His current focus is on writing and speaking.

On July 18, 2015, Chanos married Donna Uy. They currently live in Las Vegas.

Office Administration and Duties

The Nevada Attorney General's operating budget for 2005-2007 was as follows:

2005-2007 Budget	<u>\$1,899,363</u>	
	\$110,000 until the first Monday in 2007	Attorney General's Salary
	\$133,000 from the first Monday in 2007 until the first Monday in 2011	
	\$125,000	Assistant Attorney General
	\$90,874	Attorney General Counsel for Prosecuting Attorneys, Executive Director
	\$52,994	Domestic Violence Ombudsman
	\$105,000	Chief Deputy Attorney General

\$95,000	Senior Deputy Attorney General
\$85,000	Deputy Attorneys General
\$95,000	Consumer Counsel
\$63,000	Public Information Officer
\$71,100	Chief Investigator
\$67,787	Senior Investigator
\$58,608	Investigator
\$75,500	Chief Financial Officer

In 2005, the 73rd Session of the State Legislature added the following duties to the Office of the Attorney General:

- The Department of Taxation may disclose to the Attorney General any information relating to manufacturing of tobacco products and the Master Settlement Agreement. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 120, Section 19 Page 378).
- A manufacturer of tobacco products whose cigarettes are sold in this state shall, not later than April 30 of each year, execute and deliver to the Attorney General and the Department of Taxation, on a form provided by the Department of Taxation, a certification that the manufacturer of tobacco products is either: (a) A participating manufacturer; or (b) In full compliance with subsection 2 of NRS 370A.140, including any quarterly installment payments required pursuant to section 20 of this act. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 120, Section 15, Page 375).
- The Attorney General shall act as the attorney for the Division of Real Estate in all actions and proceedings brought against or by the Division. The Attorney General shall render the Division's opinions upon all questions of law relating to the construction or the interpretation of this chapter that may be submitted to him by the Division. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 494, Section 16, Page 2575).
- If there is reasonable cause to believe that a person or group of persons has engaged in or is about to engage in any act or practice which involves the use of information obtained from the community notification website, established and maintained by the Department of Public Safety, which explains the levels of notification that are assigned to sex offenders, including an offender who is assigned a Tier 2 or Tier3 level of notification, the AG may file an action for injunctive relief in the appropriate district court to prevent the occurrence or continuance of that act or practice. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 507, Section 17, Page 2868).
- The Director of the Department of Public Safety shall establish within the Department the Advisory Committee on Nevada Criminal Justice Information Sharing. The committee shall recommend policies and procedures that apply the best management practices to the activities at the Central Repository, advise on technical support for the Central Repository, and advise on the integrated information sharing of statistical data relating to crime or the delinquency of

children and will consist of the Attorney General or his designee and others. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 242, Section 1, Page 900).

- Nevada Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (DV) is created . . . the council must consist of not more than 30 members appointed by the Attorney General . . . the Attorney General or his designee is the Chairman of the Council . . . the [Council] make recommendations for any necessary legislation relating to DV. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 263, Section 4, Page 263).
- A law enforcement agency that receives an application for an identity theft passport shall submit the application and a copy of the written report to the Attorney General for processing for issuance of an identity theft passport. The Attorney General, in cooperation with any law enforcement agency, may issue an identity theft passport to a person who is a victim of identity theft. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 321, Section 1, Page 1100).
- The Attorney General and his deputies are hereby designated as the attorneys for the Board of Massage Therapists. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 325, Section 15, Page 1123).
- The Secretary of State may request that the Attorney General bring an action to enjoin any violation of a person representing himself as a notary public appointed . . . if he has not received a certificate of appointment from the Secretary of State . . . (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 468, Section 43, Page 2275).
- The Attorney General is an ex officio voting member of the Advisory Commission on Sentencing and shall serve as the Chairman of the Commission. To the extent of legislative appropriation, the Attorney General shall provide the Commission with such staff as is necessary to carry out the duties of the commission. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 179, Section 1, Page 582).

The 22nd Special Session of the Legislature added the following duty:

- The Attorney General and his deputies are the legal advisers for the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services. The Division shall advise the Attorney General of the failure of a responsible relative to contribute to the support of a recipient of public assistance as required by law. The Attorney General shall cause appropriate legal action to be taken to enforce such support and, in addition, may collect a reasonable fee, which must be added to the costs of the action in any justice's court and the State, the expense of such fee and costs to be borne by this relative. Any fees collected by the Attorney General under the provisions of this section must be deposited in the State General Fund in the State Treasury. (Statutes of Nevada 2005, Chapter 1, Section 46, Page 9).