Harvey D. Dickerson – Democrat, Elected 22nd and 25th Nevada Attorney General Terms: January 3, 1955 – January 4, 1960 January 7, 1963 – January 2, 1967 January 2, 1967 – January 4, 1971

Harvey Denver Dickerson, born on June 3, 1905 in Ely, Nevada, was the first of eight children born to Denver S. Dickerson and Una Reilly, a local teacher in Cherry Creek, Nevada. At the age of 36, Harvey's father, a member of the Silver-Democrat Party, served as Acting Governor of Nevada from 1908-1911. The Dickersons became the first family to live in the newly-completed Governor's Mansion in Carson City, and their daughter June was the first child born in the Mansion.

In 1909, Governor Denver Dickerson signed the legislation creating Clark County, Nevada. He also worked to restructure state mental hospitals and reform the state prison system. Harvey's mother, Una, not only was the First Lady of the State of Nevada, she also was a "very capable young lady, possessing marked clerical ability and [who] efficiently filled the position of Minute Clerk in the Nevada Assembly of 1903", as reported in the *Eureka Sentinel* on April 23, 1904, the day of Denver & Una's wedding. From 1925-1956, Una was the law librarian for the Washoe County Library, and her "reputation for knowing the law is still legend at the Washoe County Library.¹

Harvey Dickerson was educated in Carson City, Nevada schools, while his father was warden of the state prison.² He attended the University of Nevada in Reno. According to the 1930 edition of *Artemisia*, the annual yearbook, Dickerson was a member of the *University of Nevada Sagebrush* campus newspaper, Literary Board, and the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity.

In 1933, at age 26, Dickerson was appointed Deputy U. S. Marshal for Nevada.

It seem[ed] to be a habit of his, pledging jobs. [Senator Patrick] McCarran subsequently named "practically every deputy" in the Marshal's Office....

McCarran also was able to have his men appointed to responsible positions in state government. Harvey Dickerson, one of McCarran's deputy U.S. Marshals, wrote the senator that he was having some success in trying to group some of the legislators 'into a solid machine for the furtherance of your ideas and principles.'... Then, while the U.S. Marshal could be working for [Senator Key] Pittman, the deputies could send reports to McCarran. It was like having a private intelligence

¹ <u>http://www.nevadawomen.org/research-center/first-ladies/una-reilly-dickerson/</u>. Nevada Women's History Project. Accessed September 22, 2018.

² *Reno Gazette Journal*. October 22, 1962, page 11. Reno Gazette-Journal at newspapers.com. Accessed May 26, 2018.

service.... Apparently, the position of Deputy U.S. Marshal gave plenty of free time for political organizing.³

In 1935, Dickerson left his position in the Marshal's office to attend Southeastern University School of Law in Washington, D.C., where he earned his law degree.⁴

While attending law school, Dickerson met his future wife, Catherine Shepherd. Married in 1938, they became the parents of three children: Denver, Valerie, and Donald. In 1942, the family moved to Las Vegas where Dickerson established a private law practice. During that time, Dickerson served as Las Vegas City Attorney in November and December 1942.

Active in the Democratic Party, in 1952 and 1956, Dickerson was an alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention from Nevada.

Dickerson and two of his brothers, Denver and George, followed their father's footsteps into Nevada state politics [and the law].⁵ Harvey was the first of three Dickerson sons to serve as the president of the State Bar of Nevada from 1951 to 1952. In 1943, brother Denver became Speaker of the Nevada Assembly, and in 1963, President John F. Kennedy appointed Denver as Secretary of Guam. In 1954, the Clark County voters elected George as their District Attorney, and in 1973, he served as President of the Nevada State Bar. George's son Robert also served as president of the Nevada State Bar in 1997.

On April 16, 1953, the City of Henderson, Nevada, was incorporated. Shortly thereafter on June 18, 1953, the new Henderson City Council appointed Dickerson as the first City Attorney. In November 1953, Dickerson resigned his position as City Attorney to run for Attorney General of the State of Nevada.

On November 2, 1954, Dickerson was elected as the state's 22nd Attorney General, and he served from January 1955 through January 1960. This was the first of three terms Dickerson served as the top law enforcement officer of the state. In 1962 and in 1966, the voters reelected him as Attorney General. He became the only three-time Nevada Attorney General to serve bifurcated terms of office. Gray Mashburn and Frankie Sue Del Papa each served three consecutive terms as Attorneys General. Dickerson also is the only Nevada Attorney General to run for a fourth term, losing to Robert List in 1970.

In the 1958 Democratic primary election, Dickerson ran for Nevada Governor but lost to Grant Sawyer, so Dickerson returned to private law practice.

In the early 1960's, Dickerson again served as City Attorney for the city of North Las Vegas.

³ Edwards, Jerome E. *Pat McCarran, Political Boss of Nevada*. University of Nevada Press, Reno, Nevada, 1982. Page 67.

⁴ *Reno Gazette Journal*. October 22, 1962, page 11. Reno Gazette-Journal at newspapers.com. Accessed May 26, 2018.

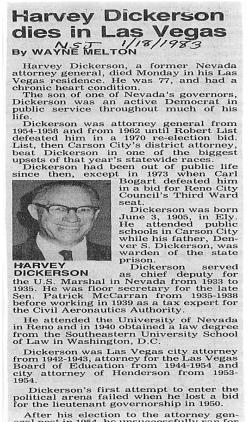
⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denver_S._Dickerson. Accessed September 22, 2018.



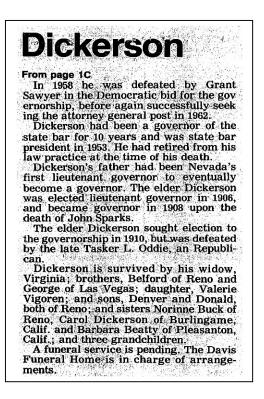
Dickerson as North Las Vegas City Attorney pictured with other North Las Vegas City Officials, C. 1960. Dickerson is in the back row, standing, far right.

In 1962, 1966, and 1970, Dickerson ran for election for Attorney General. He was successful in 1962 and 1966, but he lost reelection to Bob List in 1970.

In 1983, Dickerson died in Las Vegas.



After his election to the attorney general post in 1954, he unsuccessfully ran for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. Senate seat in 1956 while still serving his first term.



Source: Nevada State Journal, January 18, 1983.

In 1986, Virginia moved to Reno to be near her children. Virginia Dickerson, who was totally blind for the last years of her life, died at age 95, on February 16, 2009, at Renown Medical Center in Reno, Nevada, from complications of a stroke. *Reno Gazette Journal*, February 22, 2009.⁶

Election of 1950 – Democratic Primary for Lt. Governor

In 1950, in the Democratic Primary for Lt. Governor, Dickerson lost to Cliff Jones. Of the 30,913 votes cast, Cliff Jones received 11,543 (37%) votes, Wayne McLeod 8,356 (27%) votes, Dickerson received 4,402 (14%) votes, Paul Hammel received 3,156 (10%) votes, and V.F. Whittlesea received 2,340 (7.5%) votes while E.L. Nores received 1,116 (3.6%) votes.⁷

Election of 1954 – Democratic Primary for Attorney General

In 1954, in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General, of the 33,810 votes cast, Dickerson won with 19,587 (58%) votes to William Crowell's 14,223 (42%) votes.⁸

Election of 1954 – Attorney General

On November 2, 1954, the voters elected Dickerson as Nevada's 22nd Attorney General, and of the 75,053 votes cast, Dickerson (Democrat) received 42,872 (57%) votes to Dale Murphy's (Republican) 32,181 (43%) votes.⁹

Election of 1956 – Democratic Primary for US Senate

In 1956, Dickerson lost the nomination in the Democratic Primary for the U.S. Senate. Of the 39,283 votes cast, Alan Bible received 26,784 (68%) votes, to Mahlon B. Brown's 8,043 (20%) votes, Dickerson's 2,436 (6%) votes to Jay Sourwine's 2,020 (5%) votes.¹⁰

Election of 1958 – Democratic Primary for Governor

In 1958, Dickerson lost the nomination in the Democratic Primary for Governor. Of the 44,731 votes cast, F.G. "Grant" Sawyer received 20,711 (46%) votes, to Dickerson's 13,372 (32%) votes, to George E. Franklin, Jr.'s 10,175 (21%) votes to William Pate's 473 (less than 1%).¹¹

⁶ *Reno Gazette Journal*, February 22, 2009. <u>https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/rgj/obituary.aspx?</u> <u>n=virginia-dickerson-shephard&pid=124442770</u>. Accessed October 20, 2018.

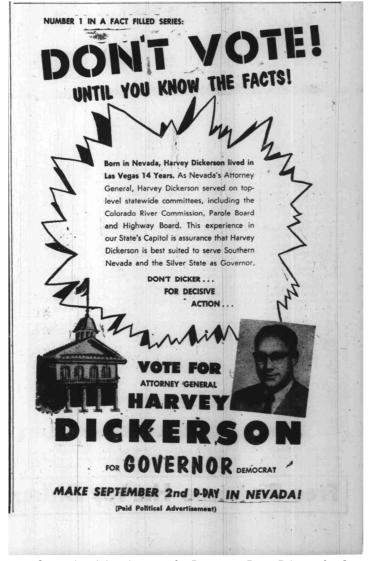
⁷ Political History of Nevada, 2006, Page 387.

⁸ Id., Page 439.

⁹ *Id.,* Page 387.

¹⁰ *Id.*, Page 440.

¹¹ *Id.,* Page 440.



Dickerson Campaign Advertisement for Democrat Party Primary for Governor, *Henderson Home News*, August 19, 1958. Source: http://digitalcollections.mypubliclibrary.com/digital/11/817/1/2.pdf.

Election of 1962 – Democratic Primary for Attorney General

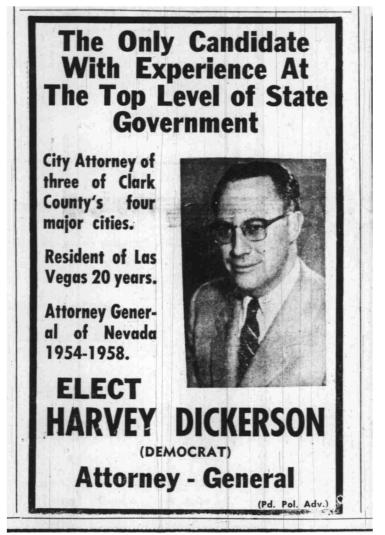
In 1962, in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General, of the 46,337 votes cast, Dickerson won with 29,409 (63%) votes to Sidney Whitmore's 9,404 (21%) votes, to Dallas Wendall Reid's 3,873 (8%) votes to Michael Wendell's 3,651 (7%) votes.¹²

Election of 1962 – Attorney General

On November 6, 1962, Dickerson was elected as Nevada's 25th Attorney General. Of the 92,027 votes cast, Dickerson (Democrat) received 56,463 (61%) votes to Cameron Batjer's (Republican) 35,564 (39%) votes.¹³

¹² Political History of Nevada, 2006, Page 441.

¹³ *Id.,* Page 391.



Dickerson Nevada Attorney General 1962 election campaign advertisement. Source: Henderson Home News, Henderson, Nevada, August 30, 1962, edition. http://digitalcollections.hendersonlibraries.com/digital/11/1237/1/19.pdf NOTE: "City Attorney of three of Clark County's four major cities" refers to Las Vegas, Henderson, and North Las Vegas.

Election of 1966 – Democratic Primary for Attorney General

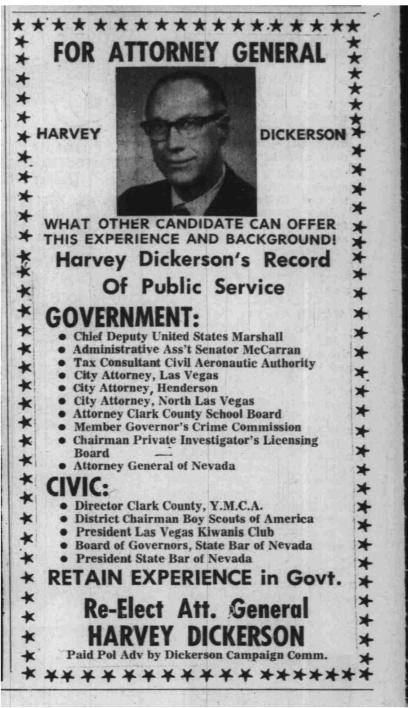
In 1966, in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General, of the 64,927 votes cast, Dickerson won 39,607 votes (61%) to William Morris's 25,320 (39%) votes.¹⁴

Election of 1966 – Attorney General

On November 8, 1966, Dickerson was re-elected for a third term as Attorney General. Of the 126,021 votes cast, Dickerson (Democrat) received 83,318 (66%) votes to E.J. Morrissett's (Republican) 42,703 (34%) votes.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Political History of Nevada*, 2006, Page 442.

¹⁵ *Id.*, Page 393.



Dickerson campaign advertisement for his fourth term as Nevada Attorney General, *Henderson Home News*, October 15, 1970. Source: http://digitalcollections.hendersonlibraries.com/digital/11/2081/1/10.pdf.

Election of 1970 – Attorney General

In 1970, Dickerson had no opponent in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General. In the General Election on November 3, 1970, he lost to the Republican Robert List. Of the 138,989 votes cast, List received 77,465 (56%) votes to Dickerson's 61,524 votes (44%).¹⁶

¹⁶ *Political History of Nevada*, 2006, Page 387.

Office Administration and Duties

Dickerson was the first Nevada Attorney General to post a deputy in Las Vegas:

Dave Goldwater Job Is A New One. Vegas Gets Deputy Atty. General

David Goldwater, Las Vegas attorney and brother of Bert Goldwater of Reno, will serve as deputy attorney general for southern Nevada starting on January 3. It is a brand new job. His appointment has been announced by Harvey Dickerson, who is attorney general-elect.

Goldwater will maintain an office in the new state office building and will be principally concerned with southern Nevada problems including those of the Colorado River Commission. He will be the first deputy attorney general to be stationed in Las Vegas on a full-time basis. Dickerson will take office January 3.¹⁷

Two of Dickerson's opinions are as follows:

In 1969, after the Board of Regents made UNLV and UNR co-equal branches of the state university, Dickerson issued Opinion No, 69-556, stating:

The University of Nevada System consisting of the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the Desert Research Institute, is the only land-grant institution within the State of Nevada. The components of the system may *not* hold individual land-grant status separate and apart from the system (italics added).¹⁸

In another opinion, Dickerson was "firm about marijuana". In an article in the *Nevada Appeal*, "[t]he question of whether first-time possession of marijuana should be a misdemeanor and not a felony is 'merely academic' as far as his office is concerned."¹⁹

Responding to criticism by some of the distric [sic] attorney's meeting in Winnemucca last weekend regarding his stand on the issue, Dickerson said 'the prosecution of narcotics cases is completely in the hands of the district attorneys. They have no alternative but to prosecute first time possession as a felony under present law.' Dickerson said he had 'nothing but the highest praise for the manner in which the district

¹⁷ Nevada State Journal. December 23, 1954.

¹⁸ Damore, David F., Robert E. Lang, et. al. UNLV The Lincy Institute Research Brief, Special Report No. 5. "Rethinking Cooperative Extension in Southern Nevada. March 2017. Page 3. <u>http://unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/Lincy-Reports-CooperativeExtSouthernNV.pdf</u>. Accessed October 20, 2018.

¹⁹ Nevada Appeal. May 12, 1970. Accessed May 26, 2018.

attorneys, by and large, handled their onerous duties with inadequate funds and understaffed personnel." He said that his position on first-time possession of marijuana was supported by the federal government and the President of the United States.²⁰

The Nevada Attorney General's operating budgets for the 1955–1957, 1963–1964, 1964-1965, 1965–1966, 1966-1967, 1967–1969, and 1969–1971 state bi-annual fiscal periods were as follows:

1955-1957	' Fiscal Year	
	\$93,995.20	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General
Salaries:	\$88,995.20	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General. Support for the Office of the Nevada Attorney General. Salary of \$7,000 for the Attorney General is included in the appropriation. From and after the expiration of the present term of the Attorney General, his successor and successors in office thereafter shall receive an annual salary of \$8,400 (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 319, Section 6, Page 528)
	\$1,400	<i>Ex Officio Director of the Department of Highways.</i> Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 320, Section 5, Page 529.
	\$5,000	For the defense of suits
		An office for the Attorney General has been established in Las Vegas, Nevada, and no provision was made for the payment of the salary for a legal stenographer in that office for the biennium ending June 30, 1955 the sum of \$1,600 for the general support of the Office of the Attorney General (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 102, Page 145).
		Patricia McCann, Legal Stenographer, Las Vegas, Nevada, Attorney General's Office; appointed April 1, 1955. (Attorney General Report July 1, 1954, to June 30, 1959, Office Staff listing).
<u>196 –1964</u>	Fiscal Year \$117,815	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General
Salaries:	\$17,000	Nevada Attorney General (Salary of \$7000.00 for the Attorney General is included in this appropriation. Statutes of Nevada 1957, Chapter 326, Section 5, Page 541, requires the Nevada Attorney General not to engage in the private practice of law. Also, the Nevada Attorney General, in his capacity as ex officio Director of the

		Department of Highways, received an annual salary of \$6,500.00.).		
	\$10,000	For the Special Account of the Attorney General		
<u>1964-1965</u>	Fiscal Year			
	\$127,131	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General		
Salaries:	\$17,000	Nevada Attorney General (Salary of the Attorney General of \$17,000 included in this appropriation)		
	\$10,000	For the Special Account of the Attorney General		
1965-1966	<u>Fiscal Year</u>			
	\$172,435 \$17,000	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General Nevada Attorney General ²¹		
Salaries:	\$17,000	Nevada Attorney General		
	\$10,000	For the Special Account of the Attorney General		
1966-1967	Fiscal Year			
	\$172,462	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General		
	\$18,000	Nevada Attorney General		
Salaries:	\$18,000 \$10,000	Nevada Attorney General For the Special Account of the Attorney General		
1967-1968	Fiscal Year			
Salaries:	\$18,000 \$16,000 \$14,548 \$65,000 \$11,000	Nevada Attorney General Chief Deputy Attorney General Chief Assistant Deputies Investigator		
1968-1969	Fiscal Year			
	\$175,071 \$18,000	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General Nevada Attorney General		
Salaries:	\$18,000 \$10,000	Nevada Attorney General For the Special Account of the Attorney General (Statutes of Nevada 1967, Chapter 441, Page 1186)		
<u>1969-1970 Fiscal Year</u>				
	\$188,155	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General		
	\$139,322	(General Fund) For the support of the Office of the Attorney General		

²¹ From July 1, 1965, until the first Monday in January 1967, the Attorney General shall receive an annual salary of \$17,000. From and after the first Monday in January 1967, the Attorney General shall receive an annual salary of \$18,000. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 364, Section 6, Page 971).

(Non-general Fund)

Salaries:	\$18,000 \$10,000 \$17,664 \$16,061 \$211,766 \$12,144 \$9,237	Nevada Attorney General For the Special Account of the Attorney General Chief Deputy Attorney General Chief Assistant Deputies Investigator Legal Research Assistant
<u>1970-1971</u>	Fiscal Year \$192,306 \$139,322	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General For the support of the Office of the Attorney General (Non-general Fund)
Salaries:	\$18,000 \$10,000	Nevada Attorney General For the Special Account of the Attorney General

The 1955 Nevada State Legislature added many duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office – the most important are listed below:

- Nevada State Prison Construction Fund was created with the Nevada Attorney General, Governor, and Secretary of State as members. The Nevada State Prison Construction Fund will issue bonds for:
 - construction, furnishing, and equipment at Nevada State Hospital (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 410, Pages 845–849);
 - construction of a women's cell block at the Prison (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 434, Pages 905–907); and
 - construction equipment and installation of hearing equipment at the Prison (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 368, Pages 617–619).
- University of Nevada, Southern Branch, Classroom Construction Fund was created with the Nevada Attorney General, Governor, and Secretary of State as members. Nevada Attorney General is to counter-sign bonds issued by the University of Nevada, Southern Branch, Classroom Construction Fund for the construction, furnishing, and equipping of classrooms at the University of Nevada, Southern Branch (now the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Campus). (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 400, Pages 790–793).
- Nevada Attorney General [shall] be legal counsel for the Nevada State Department of Highways. (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 167, Pages 247–248).
- Nevada Attorney General [shall] take enforcement action, upon complaint by the Nevada Insurance Commissioner, against Endowment Care Cemeteries. (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 192, Pages 290–291).

- Nevada Attorney General [shall], upon request by the Nevada Tax Commission, take enforcement action to collect delinquent taxes. (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 124, Section 10, Page 179).
- Nevada Attorney General [is] authorized to perform certain legal proceedings before the United State Supreme Court concerning Interstate streams. (Statutes of Nevada 1955, Chapter 46, Page 66–67).

The 1957 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office:

- When required, the Nevada Attorney General, ". . . shall give his legal opinion, in writing, upon any question of law . . ." to the State Controller, State Treasurer, Director of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources . . . ". (Statutes of Nevada 1957, Chapter 364, Section 38, Page 655).
- The Nevada Attorney General [shall] review and approval the sale (disposal) of the Nevada State Office Building in Las Vegas, Nevada, by the *State Planning Board*. (Statutes of Nevada, Chapter 276, Section 2, Page 377).
- The Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was created. The Nevada Attorney General, ". . . shall be the counsel and attorney for the department." (Statutes of Nevada, Chapter 364, Section 9, Page 647).

The 1964 Special Session of the Nevada State Legislature did not add any duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office.

The 1965 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office:

- The Nevada State Legislature created, in the Nevada Attorney General's Office, the Nevada Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 342, Page 723).
- Investigators of the Nevada Attorney General's Office were given Peace Office status. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 373, Page 105).
- All Nevada Attorney General's Office employees, except clerical, are to be in the unclassified state service. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 103, Page 147).
- Nevada Attorney General may take legal action against businesses and other organizations engaging in false advertisement. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 84, Page 122).
- Nevada Attorney General [shall] take enforcement action against local government officials who were suspected of violating the Nevada Revised Statutes that allow local government control of certain finances. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 345, Pages 725–757)

 Nevada Attorney General [shall] take action against any District Attorney that failed to enforce Nevada minimum wage statutes. (Statutes of Nevada 1965, Chapter 333, Pages 696–699).

The 1965 and 1966 Special Sessions of the Nevada State Legislature did not add any additional duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office.

The 1967 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office:

 Special Investigators of the Nevada Attorney General's Office were given Peace Office status. (Statutes of Nevada 1967, Chapter 523, Section 8, Page 1399).

The 1968 Special Session of the Nevada State Legislature did not add any additional duties to the Nevada Attorney General's Office.

The 1969 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Nevada Attorney

- The Nevada Attorney General or a Deputy Attorney General (appointed by the Attorney General) [shall] be the chairperson of the Nevada Private Investigators' Board. (Statutes of Nevada 1969, Chapter 480, Section 2, page 852)
- Nevada Attorney General [is] prohibited from representing a defendant in a criminal case. (Statutes of Nevada 1969, Chapter 251, Section 1, Page 440).
- The Nevada Attorney General [shall] report to the governor each biennium the condition of his office and, ". . . shall make suggestions as shall appear to him calculated to improve the laws of the state . . ." (Statutes of Nevada 1969, Chapter 671, Section 1455, Page 1455).