

NEVADA GOVERNOR WANTS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO FIRE STATE WORKERS



Nevada's Republican Governor Jim Gibbons plans to ask Nevada lawmakers for major changes in the state's methods for laying off workers, to make it cheaper and give officials more control over which workers get axed. The governor's budget proposes layoffs for only 370 workers, but Gibbons was prevented from making further cuts due to costs. Laying off workers is often expensive in the short term because state law requires taxpayers to contribute to departing employees' retirement savings. Also, layoff rules don't allow managers to keep the best employees, according to Gibbons' office. When layoffs are ordered, government workers with more seniority are protected from being laid off. Gibbons wants government to run "more like a business" and give department heads authority to choose which workers are laid off. That would be a major change in the state's classified employee system, which strictly controls how employees are fired or let go in order to prevent cronies from getting jobs or enemies from being punished for political reasons. The proposed changes will meet stiff opposition from Democrats who control the Legislature and from the state employees' union. "It's very clear since this governor took over, he has a vendetta against state employees," said Dennis Mallory of the local chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which represents many classified state workers. Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie, a Reno Democrat, said Gibbons' proposal will go nowhere. To make a change that dramatic would require a popular governor armed with detailed studies about the need, she said.

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