

Carson City Judge Fondi dies at 78

Nevada Appeal

Longtime Carson City District Judge Mike Fondi died Friday after a long battle with cancer.

He was 78.

Fondi was originally appointed to the bench by then-gov. Mike O'Callaghan in July 1977. He was elected to the post four times, serving a total of 23 years before retiring in August 2000.

Before becoming a judge, Fondi was elected Carson District Attorney in 1970 and served for six years until appointed to the bench. Before that, he was chief deputy DA for four years and before that a deputy attorney general. He began his public career as a legal assistant to Gov. Grant Sawyer in 1963.



Fondi

In all, Fondi spent 37 years in public service.

During his career, he handled many of the biggest cases in state history. Until the law was changed, all appeals by prison inmates were handled in Carson City's 1st District so that list included a large number of appeals by those on Nevada's death row. He was instrumental in changing that law to relieve the pressure on the two Carson City District Courts.

Fondi also was chair of the Supreme Court study that resulted in major changes to how death penalty cases were handled and helped develop new arbitration rules in Carson City as well as mediation for child custody cases to make those processes more efficient.

Fondi was born in April 1937 in Ely. He graduated from Stanford with a B.A. in 1959, and Hastings College of Law, University of California, in 1962.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Sixth arrest in Watkins murder

by Geoff Dornan

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A sixth person has now been jailed in connection with the murder of Grant Watkins.

Daniel Lewis Lease, 20, of Dayton, was ordered held in lieu of \$75,000 on suspicion of felony counts of accessory to murder and accessory to robbery. He was arrested at a residence on River Road in Dayton on a warrant issued in Carson City.

Sheriff Ken Furlong said that may not be the end of it.

"The DA's office is considering whether others should be charged," Furlong said Monday.

Since the shooting, in what Furlong says was a drug deal gone bad, brothers Reed and Jonathan Skenandore and brothers Jesus and Allen Garcia-Manriquez, Kennan Blackmore, as well as Jacob Huttman also have been jailed. Deputies have accused Reed Skenandore, 21, of actually shooting the victim in the

stomach after they met Watkins at Blackwell's Pond Park supposedly to buy marijuana. He is being held without bail.

The others are charged as accessories to the murder and being held in lieu of \$75,000 bail.

Furlong said Skenandore wasn't the only one shooting since there were two different caliber bullet casings found at the scene.

"All of the main players are in the jail and they are not coming out," Furlong said.

He said with several people there, they could have simply taken the marijuana from Watkins without hurting him.

"This is just stupid on stupid. How could these boys do this? There is just no excuse for this behavior," Furlong said.

But Furlong said Watkins shares some blame as well since he was there trying to illegally sell marijuana.

"But did he deserve to die? No way," the sheriff said.

Douglas county hotspot for radon

by Kurt Hildebrand

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Nearly a sixth of Douglas County's homes have been tested for radon, which is the highest participation in the state.

"There are still a lot more houses that need testing," said Susan Howe of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. "It's the only way to find out if you have radon."

There's a good reason why participation in Douglas County is so high, Howe said. The number of homes testing positive for the odorless, tasteless, invisible gas averages 40 percent.

At places like Stateline it's up to 70 percent.

Free radon tests will be available at a presentation scheduled for 6 p.m. today at the CVIC Hall in Minden.

Tests are also available at the Gardnerville office of the Cooperative Extension, or at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District at Stateline.

Instructions are included with the test kits.

Radon is produced by the breakdown of uranium in naturally occurring granite. Without a means to vent it out of crawl spaces, it can collect in closed spaces

during the winter.

According to experts, living in a home with an average 4 picocuries has the same risk as developing lung cancer as smoking a half pack of cigarettes a day, Howe said.

Howe said that about a fifth of the homeowners with high radon levels have had their homes fixed.

"There are a lot more people being made aware of this," she said.

She suggested anyone purchasing a home ask for a radon test.

January was proclaimed Radon Action Month by Douglas County commissioners.

Appeal filed to block repeal of commerce tax

by Geoff Dornan

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The group seeking to defend the controversial commerce tax has appealed the district court's decision to the Nevada Supreme Court.

The group, in favor of the commerce tax, is asking the Supreme Court to overturn District Judge James Wilson's ruling that the measure — to repeal the tax — could go on the ballot.

Unlike a broader petition to repeal the entire 2015 tax package, the petition spearheaded by Controller Ron Knecht survived a legal challenge after Wilson ruled against proponents on nearly every score.

Wilson said those seeking to repeal the tax shouldn't have to find money to make up the lost revenue from the tax on business gross revenues. He said that would place a huge burden on anyone attempting to repeal a tax.

He also rejected the argument by the Coalition for Nevada's Future that the petition is void because its Description of Effect doesn't tell voters that a "yes" vote would repeal the tax but that a "no" vote would essentially etch the commerce tax in stone.

In the appeal brief filed Monday, Coalition lawyers Kevin Benson and Matt Griffin also argued the Description of Effect must explain that, if the petition succeeds, lawmakers must either replace the \$121 million it is expected to generate or reduce expenditures.

They repeated their arguments that far too many elements of the referendum petition are administrative details which are prohibited in any petition. They believe it should be rewritten as an

initiative petition so that, if voters uphold the tax, it doesn't set the conditions of the petition in stone, alterable only by voters in the future.

"A referendum that contains administrative provisions is therefore void because it goes beyond approving or disapproving of the policy of the state and instead risks enshrining into law the smallest bureaucratic details," they argued.

A key argument they raise in the brief is the one issue Wilson didn't decide, saying it wasn't legally ripe: whether the petition is invalid because it would unconstitutionally unbalance the state budget approved by the 2015 Legislature.

"As the holder of the state's purse strings, the Legislature passed the budget and the commerce tax was necessary to raise the revenue required to fund expenditures over the next two years," they wrote.

They pointed out that under the state Constitution, the Legislature has no power to repeal a tax that is part of the current budget without raising revenues to replace it or cutting expenditures.

Since the petition power is coequal with that of the Legislature, "the people likewise cannot repeal a tax that is part of the Legislature's 2015 annual budget."

Finally, they argued the petition is invalid because it is a referendum on a Senate Bill, not a statute.

If the petition survives the legal process, Knecht and his backers will have to collect at least 55,234 valid voter signatures including at least 13,809 in each of Nevada's four petition districts — the state's congressional districts — to put it on the November ballot.

Jose J. Yglesias August 8, 1929 - January 15, 2016

Jose Yglesias of Minden, Nevada passed away peacefully in his sleep on Friday, January 15, 2016. He was born and raised in Washington, D.C., the only child of Maria and Jose Castro Yglesias, who emigrated from the mountains of Galicia, Spain, at the turn of the century. Jose attended St. John's college High School. He earned his bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Catholic University of America in 1951. After graduation, he took a job with Vitro Laboratories where he worked for eleven years on classified research for the U.S. government. He was nominated for engineer of the year by the D.C. Council of Engineering and Architectural Societies and the Washington Academy of Sciences in 1962. After leaving Vitro Lab, he worked for Trident Labs for three years. In 1966 he founded and was Chairman and CEO of Syscon Corporation, a software design firm. By 1986, the company had grown to a publicly-traded corporation that employed over 1,500 people with 35 offices in 23 locations throughout the United States.

After selling Syscon Corporation in 1986, he joined Harnischfeger industries as a Senior Vice President. He was named Hispanic Businessman of the Year in 1987 by the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Jose served on the board of many associations and companies including HK Systems, the Government Division of the Electronics Industries Association, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the National Security Industrial Association, and the Navy League. One of his proudest moments was meeting President Ronald Reagan at the White House.

Jose married Sandra Furnish in 1990 and moved to Zephyr Cove, Nevada. After his retirement in 1991, he and Sandra enjoyed watching Washington Redskins football, skiing, golfing, and collecting fine wines. In 2000, they built a home in the Carson Valley where he lived until his death. Jose was preceded in death by his parents, his step-daughter Brenda Furnish, and his first wife Magenta. He is survived by Sandra, his wife of 25 years of Minden, Nevada; his five children, Colette Silver of Chevy Chase, Maryland, Caren Livengood, of San Francisco, California, Cathy Ensor of Oxford, Maryland, John Yglesias of Fairfax, Virginia, Paul Yglesias of Easton, Maryland and stepson Floyd Furnish of Ridgecrest, California. He leaves 13 beloved grandchildren: Ian, Hugh, and Magenta Livengood, Nathan, Max, and Jennie Silver, Michael and Katie Ensor, Brandon, Samantha, Diana and Jessica Yglesias, and Craig Black. He also leaves on great granddaughter, Isabella Yglesias.

Services will be held at 1:00pm on Friday, January 29, at St. Gall Catholic Church in Gardnerville, Nevada. Burial to follow at Eastside Memorial Cemetery, 1600 Buckeye Road, Minden, Nevada. A viewing will be held at Walton's Funeral Home, 1521 Church Street, Gardnerville, Nevada on Thursday, January 28, from 5:30pm to 7:00pm.

Final arrangements in the care of Walton's Funeral Home, Gardnerville, Nevada (775) 783-9312.

