

# Nevada not any better for business

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By Jim Boren

You gotta love the sleight of hand Nevada economic development officials are using in their \$1 million advertising plan to lure California businesses to their state. In ripping California, they suggest that all is well in the Silver State.

So here's what you won't hear in those ads:

Nevada had the nation's highest home foreclosure rate for the 31st-straight month.

U-Haul dealerships in Nevada can hardly keep moving trucks on their lots as residents fishtail out of the once-booming state.

Nevada casino revenues report double-digit revenue declines because of the sour economy and the beating they are taking from California's Indian casinos.

Nevada's unemployment rate of 12% was fifth-worse in the nation -- even worse than California's 11.6% rate.

So let's talk about the real Nevada. It's where Californians go to gamble and do things that aren't legal in the Golden State. It's a dumping ground for America's nuclear waste. And judging by the Las Vegas version of "Cops," it's where everyone goes to score crank and get arrested.

Readers know that I don't defend California very often. State government is a mess. Our infrastructure is falling apart. We're taxed every time we turn around. But in this comparison, Nevada is the competition and California wins hands down. In fact, I'd double down on California's economic future compared with Nevada.

I didn't set out to bash Nevada in this column because I think the advertising campaign is excellent. The campaign has talking chimps as California lawmakers -- I might have made that comparison myself -- and says businesses can "kiss their assets goodbye" if they stay in the Golden State.

Besides, it's a nice payback for the time in 2004 that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger drove an 18-wheeler down the Las Vegas Strip trying to get Nevada businesses to move to California. "Arnold's Moving Company" was painted on the truck.

So there's been this back and forth between the two neighboring states. Nevada launched the latest salvo last week with the "assets" ad campaign, and it's gotten a lot of media play.

But someone has to offer truth in advertising, so I'll do it because I haven't heard anyone else pointing out the ironies in the Nevada campaign.

Nevada's economy is reeling, and that's why they are poaching California businesses. Someone there has decided the economy needs to be based on more than booze, sex and gambling.

I love visiting Las Vegas, but it's downright depressing in Sin City these days. It's doing so poorly that you can get a room at the Luxor on the Strip for \$39 a night. That wouldn't get a decent room in Barstow. But then you couldn't get an all-you-can-eat breakfast for \$1.99 in Barstow.

Las Vegas officials have admitted that there's been more than a 100% increase in the number of abandoned and neglected properties. Most tourists don't see this seamy side of Nevada's biggest city, but it's there and it's growing.

In announcing the Nevada ad blitz against California, Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman told reporters "It's going to drive them bonkers. We're going to crush them." Goodman is a great spokesman for his city, and you have to love a mayor whose likeness has been put on gambling chips at one casino and had a bobblehead night at a Las Vegas baseball game.

But Nevada isn't going to crush anyone right now, and this latest campaign has the feel of desperation. Nothing worse than being a gambler and out of money.

I'm almost feeling sorry for them, even though they were a gloating bunch when Nevada was riding the economic boom. But right now, Nevada is kissing its own "assets goodbye."