

## **Agassi urges education reforms**

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CARSON CITY, Nev.—Tennis champion Andre Agassi asked Nevada lawmakers on Wednesday to take advantage of "a ripe opportunity" to make education system changes in a state that ranks near the bottom nationally in K-12 per-pupil spending and graduation rates.

Agassi told Senate and Assembly education committees he understood there's a difficult combination of a revenue shortfall coupled with the challenge of meeting student learning needs, but the state must help children succeed.

"I personally know what it feels like to underachieve and come in last, because I slipped to an embarrassing low in my career," said Agassi, who lives in Las Vegas. "My ranking was the tennis equivalent of being the state that comes in 50th."

The tennis pro also gave lawmakers a progress report on his Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy, a public charter school that serves at-risk students that he opened in Las Vegas in 2001. The school is set to graduate its first senior class in June.

Agassi spoke as lawmakers took testimony on three different charter school bills, including SB391 which would let charter schools implement procedures to ensure students who are accepted at such schools are eligible.

Representatives of Agassi's academy favored the bill, saying some families try to circumvent rules by steps such as giving a bogus address to comply with a requirement that they live within a two-mile radius of the campus.

Benjamin Sayeski, the preparatory school's school board chairman, says that adherence to the rules means school representatives "can look people in the eye and say we are serving the population of at-risk students we intended to serve."

AB489 and SB385 are two similar charter school bills that would create the Nevada Charter School Institute. The institute's purpose would be to explore the existing sponsorship structure for charter schools to determine how charter schools could be sponsored in the future.