



# Remembering Bob Cashell

**If you've been active in Reno civic life** during the past 30 years, you've surely met former Reno Mayor Bob Cashell and probably have a story to tell about him. Cashell, who died last week at the age of 81, was instantly recognizable around town, greeting everyone with the same genuine attention accompanied by a hearty laugh in his booming voice. Even those of us who mostly disagreed with his pro-development, "good old boy" politics found much to admire in the man, who was generous by nature and who cared deeply for those struggling with poverty, addiction and homelessness.

I can't remember the first time I met Cashell because it feels like I've always known him. He was like a favorite uncle you can spar with at Thanksgiving dinner who didn't have to win every argument and was willing to listen to another perspective. Even when we disagreed, I always felt heard.

Reno's social media has been full of Cashell stories. People remember him peeling off a \$100 bill from his money clip when their child struggled to sell raffle tickets. He didn't want the tickets, he just wanted to support the young person and their cause. As a businessman he donated to every conceivable civic event without expecting anything in return. He wanted to help. He needed to help because it was his community, and he was part of it.

I worked closely with the Mayor during one legislative session to find the money in the state's budget to close the final gap in funding for Reno's emergency shelter, guiding the City's request through the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. When a member of the City Council started attacking me publicly for an unrelated reason, Cashell was worried I'd get mad and stop helping him even though I told him I would never punish the city, much less the homeless, for a

councilman's boorish behavior. When the attacks continued and intensified, Cashell came to the legislative building one morning and crawled into my office on his knees begging forgiveness. I was horrified and rushed to help him up while a crowd gathered in the foyer gawking at the Mayor who was enjoying every second of his dramatic gesture.

That was Bob Cashell. He was fully committed to everything he believed in and he'd talk your ear off about it. If you didn't agree with him, he'd try to persuade you, with facts and emotion but without rancor or becoming a bully. He didn't hold a grudge if you disagreed with him, although it tickled him when I told him years after the fact that he was right about the train tracks.

Nevada newcomers may not realize that Cashell was once a Democrat, changing his party affiliation while he was serving as Lt. Governor. But as the Tea Party Republicans started moving

the party far to the right, he'd grumble about it and laugh when I'd remind him he could always change back since clearly he had the heart of a Democrat.

While I can't remember the first time I met Cashell, I do remember the last conversation I had with him at the gym. I hadn't seen him there in weeks, and I quizzed him on his health as he walked the track. He told me in detail about his rehab plan and we also discussed the president; I'll leave his comments to your imagination. I teased him about doing more talking than walking, and off he went only to interrupt me five minutes later to say he realized he hadn't asked me how I was doing and apologized for what he perceived as a lack of courtesy and friendship.

We'll miss you, Mr. Mayor. You served us well. □

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