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**Opinion:**

## **Open And Accessible Government? Why Is This So Hard To Understand?**

*Part Of Reason: There Are So Many Conspiracy Theories  
Circulating*

by Johnny Gunn

On or about June 1 city and county budgets in the Silver State are supposed to be complete as the fiscal year begins July 1 each year. Cities and counties in Nevada should now be operating under their fiscal year 2006-07 budgets, but you and I are not allowed to know what is in those budgets. This isn't a law, and paranoid minds could certainly develop conspiracy theories to prove the point that we are being denied this information on purpose.

On the web sites of Reno, Las Vegas, Clark County, and Washoe County, there are no budgets for fiscal year 2006-07 posted. Washoe County and the City of Reno have released some figures, but not the budget. Why? We're told we can go to the budget departments and purchase a copy, but as a citizen why should we be forced to pay for something that is a public document?

A conspiracist would say this is more than just a failure to communicate; something government agencies are very good at doing. Secrecy in government is nothing new of course, but it is getting more and more difficult to get simple basic facts from today's government agencies. Many hailed the idea of government web pages on the Internet, and for some agencies, they are well ordered, well taken care of, but for

many, they appear to be something that is rarely opened and updated.

An example. A press report from Nevada's Homeland Security agency discussing a recent evaluation of the state's vulnerabilities recommends one go to <http://homelandsecurity.nv.gov> and look at Unclassified Summary of the Nevada's Vulnerability Assessment. Go ahead and try. If it exists it is well hidden.

There is not one single citizen of Nevada that isn't affected by budgets, and when these documents are hidden from us, it creates questions of whether or not there is a desire to hide the information for some ulterior motive. We have had a number of politicians and various agency heads in cities and counties around the state being under suspicion of criminal activity dealing with subjects that should be open to the public. A county official in Clark County has been accused of selling thousands of dollars worth of information from her office, information that was then denied to others that should have access to the information.

Open government, accountable employees and politicians, access to public documents should not even be a question. This is something we should not even have to think about. Open your home page, go to your government's home page, click on budget, and you should have immediate

access. It's your money they are messing around with. In Washoe County it has been reported that there is a 15-percent increase in the FY 2006-07 budget, that they will be spending \$787 million over the next 12 months, and we can't find the figures on the budget page of their web site.

In Clark County, the web site has been "remodeled" and there is no budget page. In Las Vegas and Reno, the budget page shows FY 2005-06. If this isn't a conspiracy, and I think most of us will say that it isn't, it means that government employees in the various government offices aren't doing their job. It also means that whoever is responsible for making sure the work is done is also

shirking. And those that spend the money, that run for reelection regularly are also not performing by making sure we know they are doing their job properly.

Department heads, elected officials, city and county managers, are all denying accountability, denying responsibility, denying you access to your government. I guess tar and feathers are no longer acceptable, but voting the bums out is proper. Government, from the lowest end to the highest must be responsible to those it governs, and a complete failure to communicate its resources to those that pay the way is an abrogation of responsibility.

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