

Typo personality

BY REBECCA ZISCH

REBECCA ZISCH SPLITS HER TIME BETWEEN THE OFFICE OF COLLEGE RELATIONS AT NEVADA STATE COLLEGE AND THE WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT UNLV.

The Tax and Spending Control petition that has been circulated at the DMV, grocery stores and other public locations gathered more than 100,000 signatures, significantly more than needed for inclusion on the November ballot. So, why did it come so close to being disqualified from the November ballot? Because nobody bothered to proofread it.

The TASC petition was found to contain a one-word typing error and was therefore being considered for ineligibility by Secretary of State Dean Heller. The proposal on this petition was designed to limit the growth of spending by state and local governments and has met with mixed reactions because of its apparent inadequacies for emergency spending or allowances for growth. But if enough signatures were gathered, shouldn't it be put to the public for a vote? Why not just correct the error? After all, what's one little mistake?

A one-word error may not seem like so much. Everyday, anyone who types even a single e-mail makes an error in spelling, grammar or punctuation. And people who text message on cell phones and use instant-messaging software misspell words on purpose. As a country, we're raising the next generation to invent spellings and shorthand that only vaguely represent the English language as we used to know it. And as a college professor, I have seen the worst of what too many people allow to pass for acceptable written communication.

But the error in the TASC petition is not just a matter of a misplaced apostrophe or the wrong use of *there*, *their* or *they're*. This may very well have been the most expensive typo ever. This one little mistake is purported to increase the initiative's allowed spending by state government by \$1.3 billion more than the petition's authors intended. And for a petition that was meant to limit state spending, this was the most ironic error possible.

But what's even more ironic is that state Sen. Bob Beers actually thinks that the error might be a good thing. Beers, the TASC leader and a Republican gubernatorial candidate, has stated the petition's mistake could help raise more support for the initiative. He was quoted in the *Review-Journal* as saying, "I would think if anybody had concerns before, then they should be assuaged by the more generous number."

Is Beers actually endorsing the error not as a mistake, but as updated economic methodology? Is his motto to change political policy to match what accidentally slipped passed the proofreader, if there ever was one? Is this the kind of teaching he wants in our public schools? Don't correct errors; just pretend that's what was intended. And these are the same public schools whose budgets would be capped if the TASC measure were to pass in November.

But apparently, he thinks that if it garners support from the public, then it must be good. The problem with this theory is that it assumes that all of the people who signed the petition actually read it. And Americans are just as unlikely to read what they sign as they are to proofread what they write. **CL**