

FACTORS INFLUENCING STATEHOOD

Nevada became a state before most other territories in the West. Nevada's rise as a separate territory and then admittance into the Union was guided largely by external events.

- Settlement linked to the national “land grab” following the Mexican-American War (1848)
- Mormon settlement brought people to the region
- The search for mineral wealth brought people and a minimal infrastructure to support both settlers and travelers.
- Initially part of Utah territory governed by Mormons from SLC and perhaps designed to be part of a massive “State of Desert.”

Creation of a Separate Territory

Nevada sought separate territorial status and was granted status as a territory in March 1861. But agitation for territorial status had been fairly constant since the early 1850s.

- Problems with Mormon governance
- “Rush to Washoe” – Comstock Discoveries
- Lack of Civil Order
- Personal Ambitions

- An unauthorized bid for statehood in 1863 fails (mining tax and Union Party “slate” of candidates leads to rejection of state constitution by voters.)

Statehood results from National pressures

- Civil War Politics
- The 1864 presidential election
- Effort of Senator Doolittle
- 1864 Enabling Act allows NV, CO and NE to seek statehood
- Personal Ambitions

ERAS OF PARTY CONTROL IN NEVADA

1864 – 1892: REPUBLICAN

1892 – 1908: DOMINANCE OF THE SILVER QUESTION

1908 – 1932: CLOSE PARTY BALANCE (Strong individual “political machines”)

1932 – 1988: DEMOCRAT DOMINATED

1988 – Present: CLOSE PARTY BALANCE

CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES ON NEVADA POLITICS

- Rapid population growth
- Dominance of gaming
- Increased two-party competition (and slightly stronger parties)
- Weak governing institutions
- Continuing “libertarian” outlook
- Low voter participation
- Continuing federal presence
- Continuing regional splits
- Possible re-emergence of labor