

Distinguished Nevadan Nomination Form

Deadline: December 31

Please send all nominations to:

Scott G. Wasserman, Chief Executive Officer & Special Counsel
Board of Regents
2601 Enterprise Road, Reno, NV 89512
e-mail: Scott_Wasserman@nshe.nevada.edu Fax: (775) 327-5049

1. Salutation: ☒ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Dr.

2. Nominee's Name *(please ensure correct spelling):*

Mr. Ed Scott

3. Nominee's Mailing Address: _____

4. Nominee's Phone Number: Work: _____ **Home:** _____

5. Employment History *(attach additional material if necessary):*

Please see biographical information (attached).

6. Educational Background *(attach additional material if necessary):*

Please see biographical information (attached).

7. Reasons for Nomination: *(Please include outstanding accomplishments, achievements, and contributions to Nevada and its people. Please be specific and provide considerable detail. You may attach additional pages if necessary.)*

Please see biographical information (attached).

8. Other NSHE Awards *(please list other awards this individual has received):*

Please see biographical information (attached).

9. Nominated by Regent: FULL BOARD

Nomination of Ed Scott for the Distinguished Nevadan Award

November, 2014

Ed Scott moved to Nevada in 1950 from rural Louisiana to find work. His brothers-in-law worked at the Herlong Army Depot and soon, so did he, which is where his lifetime of social and political activism began. In 1950 it was illegal to discriminate in housing, jobs, and services at the federal level but his request for housing outside of the race ghetto at the base section" was refused. He was not an activist then, just a young man with a family wanting the same access to housing the white men had. Three times he was offered a house in the "black area," three times he refused. Threatened with being "thrown out the gate," he and the fledgling NAACP in Herlong filed a complaint with the NAACP regional office, asking for intervention at the federal level. This not only resulted in housing for Scott and his family but in the removal of the housing officer and the commanding officer of the base. More important in the long run, it showed Scott the power of resistance and perseverance which fared him well as he became the president of the Reno chapter of the NAACP in 1957.

During this period of social upheaval, Ed Scott led the push for a Nevada Equal Rights bill of 1961. The NAACP took to the streets, marching, picketing, staging sit-ins and pressuring legislators in every possible way. Ed Scott's powerful commitment to equal rights kept the equal rights bill at the center of the legislative agenda during that session, and convinced casino owners that ongoing and disruptive picketing would create an even worse public image for gambling and for Reno than they already had across the nation. A southern legislator finally agreed to introduce the bill after much lobbying by the NAACP leadership, but it was withdrawn at the last minute and was virtually dead for that legislative session. Angered by this rejection, the NAACP led dramatic sit-ins, picketing in Reno and Carson City, and insisted they would continue these activities until the next legislative session, gaining the attention of the regional and national press. Ultimately, an agreement was reached to reintroduce the bill as an emergency measure at the last minute of the legislative session if the picketing and sit-ins would stop. The bill immediately passed both houses and was on Governor Sawyer's desk within days. The bill established the Equal Rights Commission and provided for an extensive study of the civil rights of black citizens in Nevada. However, it took three more years of effort, working with citizens, Reno's business community, the legislator and with NAACP branches in Tonopah and Las Vegas and finally more picketing and sit-ins to get the bill funded in 1963. Overcoming efforts on the part of legislators to weaken the bill and cripple its intent, Ed Scott, now the political lobbyist for the NAACP, led the persistent push to keep the bill alive and strong.

After this significant achievement, he spearheaded the founding of the Race Relations Center in Reno, started by a small grant from Maya Miller, which protected the rights of citizens in the areas of housing, employment and consumer rights. He served as its director for the next twelve years. His considerable interpersonal skills and ability to work with a wide range of people from city and county managers to casino owners and small businesses allowed him to solve problems informally as well as to rely on formal channels when necessary. He worked with employers who had no black employees to create

jobs and to fill them, with people, white and black, who were mistreated by property owners, businesses and professionals, resolving financial and civil disputes. The Race Relations Center was viewed as the clearinghouse for complaints of discrimination and injustice in Washoe County and was the dominant force in social justice efforts for over a decade.

In addition to these major accomplishments that contributed significantly to the improvement of the social and political climate in Nevada, Mr. Scott served on what was then called the State Mental Health and Retardation Board which oversaw all areas of mental health in Nevada, from hiring to oversight of the state mental hospital, for sixteen years. Initially appointed by Governor Grant Sawyer, he was re-appointed by the next two governors as well. His activism and social conscience were central to his participation on that board just as they had been in his efforts to get the Equal Rights Act passed. A story is told of the board hearing a plea from disadvantaged Las Vegas citizens who had been prohibited from using the office phone there to call family members who were patients at the state mental hospital in Reno. Finally, the citizens picketed the Board and when the Board took a break, discussing where to go for lunch, Eddie said, "you all go on without me, I'll be picketing outside."

Another of his important contributions to the state was serving on the Regional Advisory Committee of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for many years. Members of this committee served as the "eyes and ears" of the Commission in the states and were responsible for monitoring and reporting civil rights violations and working on solutions for them. During this same period he served on the Washoe County grand jury for a period of four years, reflecting his commitment to social justice issues. He also hosted a radio show on KOLO that addressed community concerns, keeping issues related to equality and access in the public consciousness during a period of significant social change.

It is difficult for those who did not live in Nevada before the seventies to imagine the degree of race discrimination that existed and the degree of animosity to change. Ed Scott had the personal characteristics to lead the fight to overcome the considerable resistance and to persevere during a very long and hard-fought campaign. After the formal achievement of an equal rights bill, he was convinced that someone had to be a watchdog, to implement the changes, and to make sure the community changed its practices, so he remained immersed in the efforts for the next several decades. He never sought the spotlight, was inclusive and cooperative, and was as happy to work behind the scenes as he was to be in the front of the picket line. His good nature and easy manner were accompanied by a steely resolve to fight for the rights of those who were not equipped to fight for themselves and to lead those who were prepared to join the fight.

Now in his mid-eighties and still a very visible member of the black community and the community of social activists, his sense of commitment and his sense of humor remain intact. He was very appreciative of being considered for the Distinguished Nevadan award and would, we are sure, be highly honored if he were to receive such recognition.