

# Senator paints homeowners associations with broad, bad brush

**T** rue confession time. I'm the treasurer of a homeowners association board. Hence, I am probably a member of organized crime in the eyes of state Sen. Mike Schneider, the leading critic of HOAs.

Our association even had a construction defect case, so I'm doubtlessly a crook. Not to mention an embarrassment to Nevada.

Schneider, D-Las Vegas, believes HOAs don't work, according to an Associated Press story Thursday. His proof is: There are HOAs under investigation by the FBI.

"This is organized crime," he said. "They've embarrassed this state. They've embarrassed this Legislature."

Well, just call me Jane "Rip-off" Morrison.

Schneider hears a lot from critics of homeowners associations and, since the mid-1990s, has postured himself as a defender of



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COMMENTARY

defenseless homeowners against the HOA board bullies.

I'm sure there are abusers, but about 1.2 million people in Southern Nevada live in nearly 3,000 HOAs, and Schneider is sliming the majority of board members.

His Senate Bill 187 wants to put more restrictions on boards. As far back as 1997, he has submitted bills to tell HOAs how they should be run. He has a sympathetic ear for homeowners who feel put upon by boards. Got a problem?

He'll write a law to fix it.

Mine is a small HOA, just 44 homes. More often than not, we get complaints from homeowners who want us to be stricter in enforcing rules, not more lenient.

On a monthly basis, our board deals with issues like people who use their garages as storage and want to park in the limited guest parking, unpaid BOA dues, whether a group home is a business, should we take out the grass, should little rocks be replaced with larger rocks, should we install solar heating for the pool, what can we do about one homeowner who refuses to pay dues and now owes nearly \$10,000.

Plus, the eternal challenge: People who don't pick up their dog's poop.

As treasurer, I have the reputation as a penny-pincher, and I'm diligent about looking for billing mistakes or a bill that suggests something is amiss, like a water leak. I don't

mind doing it because my home is my biggest investment and worth protecting.

The president takes the most calls, while board members who oversee the landscaping and the pool take the most grief.

If trying to keep a neighborhood clean, safe and attractive is organized crime, then I guess you can call me "Mean Jane" Morrison, even though I haven't whacked anybody. Yet.

We have a professional manager, Kim Kallfelz of HOA Management, who guides us. Her company manages 14 HOAs, and she has been in the business for 10 years.

"I don't have rogue boards," she said. "I think there's rogue management companies too, or the FBI wouldn't be investigating. But I think the good management companies and the good boards are trying to do the right thing."

The FBI is looking into whether certain board members were in collusion

with attorneys and contractors in questionable construction defect lawsuits.

The number of bad boards is a smaller number than Schneider seems to think. Kallfelz said in 10 years she only fired two HOAs for not abiding by the law.

"I'm not risking my license in Nevada," she said. "If they don't want to do things legally and completely transparent, I don't want to manage you."

Obviously, there are boards that run amok. Give some people power and all they do is abuse it.

In a perfect world, neighbors being neighborly would solve most problems without any rules at all. But in an imperfect world, some of us are happy in HOAs. And that doesn't make us the bad guys, even when we're on the board.

Jane Ann Morrison's column appears Monday, Thursday and Saturday.

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