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Amodei Takes Hope from Massachusetts Election

By ADELLA HARDING- Staff Writer
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ELKO — State Sen. Mark Amodei, R-Carson City, sees Republican Scott Brown’s victory in Massachusetts last week as a sign that people are paying attention to what is happening in this country.

“People think it’s a wake-up call,” he said during a visit to Elko.

From his own perspective, he said if Brown could gain name recognition in such a short time to win, maybe he will be able to get his name known enough to win the chance to battle Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., in November for a U.S. Senate seat.

Brown defeated Democrat Martha Coakley for the Senate seat the late Sen. Edward Kennedy held for so long.

Amodei greeted people at Machi’s Friday night as part of his campaign, but he didn’t give a campaign speech.

He has been in the Nevada Senate 12 years and is termed-out from running again for his seat so his focus is on the U.S. Senate race, but he is still looking at state issues, such as the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada proposal to increase mining taxes in the state.

He said in an interview at Machi’s those involved with PLAN initially stressed environmental issues, but the industry met those issues “head on and dealt with them, so they decided if they can’t beat the industry on environmental issues, they will beat them on taxes.”

PLAN has started a petition drive to change the way the mining industry is taxed, which is currently on net proceeds, rather than gross receipts as PLAN wants, and Amodei opposes PLAN’s proposed constitutional amendment.

Amodei was the president of the Nevada Mining Association from the fall of 2007 to the end of 2008, when he resigned to focus on his state Senate job without running into

conflicts of interest.

He said in a phone interview before his Elko visit that his work in the Legislature and for the mining association gives him an edge on mining issues important to northeastern Nevada, including the PLAN proposal.

The mining industry pays \$14,000 per employee in state and local taxes, compared with \$3,600 per employee in the gaming industry, Amodei said.

“Those mining employees don’t create huge traffic impacts. Most are drug-tested. They pay for their own homes and health care deductibles and the food on their tables,” he said.

Amodei has been to Elko, local mines and the Elko Mining Expo, and he said he understands how important mining is to Elko’s economy.

He also disputes the argument that Reid can do more for Nevada because he is the Senate majority leader.

“When you are the majority leader, you got that job because you represent the position of the caucus and deliver the agenda for your party and the one in the White House,” Amodei said.

In his brochure, Amodei states that the United States needs “tort reform and other real health care reforms and not government control with more spending and taxes,” and he said the “government needs to be fiscally responsible — Americans can spend their hard-earned money more wisely than bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.”

Amodei is in a field of Republican candidates looking to get on the ballot to challenge Reid, including former Republican Party Chairwoman Sue Lowden, Las Vegas businessman Danny Tarkanian and former state legislator Sharron Angle.

Amodei said he has raised roughly \$100,000 in campaign contributions.

“I always planned a grassroots kind of campaign,” he said.

He was with the Judge Advocate’s office while in the U.S Army and has been practicing law since his return to Nevada.

During Amodei’s time in the state Senate, he was president pro-tem of the Senate for three sessions, chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee and served on the Nature Resources and the interim Public Lands Committee. He points out in his brochure that the Nevada Policy Research Institute as a “Friend to the Taxpayer” for his strong stance against higher taxes.

Looking at Nevada’s financial plight, Amodei said “everybody is talking about taxes, but

they are ignoring half of the issue — spending.”

He said the state has to budget to control expenditures, “so you don’t have Katie bar the door,” and he believes the education system has to be willing to take cuts when times are tough because they got more money when times were better in the state.

“We need to tie growth to objective criteria so when times are good we have something to put back,” Amodei said in talking about the state budget with Elko County Commissioner Warren Russell at the greet-and-meet event.