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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director, HLWM
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative
DATE: December 18, 1987
SUBJECT: Newspaper Articles

Please find enclosed more information that appeared in our local newspaper that is of interest.

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cc: Mr. Greg Cook
Ms. Sue Gagner

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Nevada chosen for nuke dump

By Steve Tetreault
Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A House-Senate negotiating committee decided Thursday to rework the nation's nuclear waste program to make Nevada the first and only choice for a high-level nuclear waste dump.

In a charged political atmosphere that characterized negotiations this week, lawmakers agreed to drop Texas and Washington as possible sites for the dump. They

also worked out a compromise on interim nuclear waste storage aimed at comforting states in the South that may get such a facility.

Nons of the four Nevada members of Congress, who oppose locating the dump in their state, was on the 39-member negotiating panel. They all later charged the state was done in by politics.

"It has not been a good week for Nevada. We took it in the ear," said Rep. Jim Bilbray, D-Nev., who sat in the audience among lob-

byists, reporters and aides when the final touches were made to the agreement.

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., said the negotiators put "raw politics" before public health and safety. Rep. Barbara Vucanovich, R-Nev., pronounced herself "really disgusted."

Sen. Chic Hecht, R-Nev. said he was not surprised. "The problem is, nobody wants nuclear waste in their back yard."

Gov. Richard Bryan called

Thursday's decision by congressional negotiators "a legislative atrocity."

Studying only Yucca Mountain as a site for the dump ignores the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act and confirms that Nevada was pre-selected as a site for the dump, Bryan said in a statement.

"Our scientific and technical concerns, although ignored, on Capitol Hill, will eventually disqualify Yucca Mountain," he said. "We will continue to vigorously

fight the decision on scientific, technical and legal grounds in the courts and through whatever avenues are necessary to right this injustice."

But Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, boasted, "This solves the nuclear waste problem. We got a site and we will be able to put the nuclear waste there safely."

Johnston said he was well aware that "Nevadans are not particular-

ly happy about it, but they've known for sometime they would be picked."

"I would bet anything that after it is built they would deem it one of their treasures," he said.

During the session, several negotiators made gestures to Nevada.

"We are doing a drastic thing to a fine state. We're asking them to do it in all good spirit," said Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz.

But Nevada was not in the fore-

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Nuke

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front of concern as negotiations progressed during the week. Both sides proposed early to target Yucca Mountain near the Nevada Test Site for advanced tests to determine whether it could become home to thousands of tons of radioactive fuel rods from nuclear power plants.

Under the outline of the compromise released Thursday, the Energy Department would be directed to drill an exploratory shaft and conduct other "site characterization" work at Yucca Mountain.

At the same time, it would terminate all studies being done on the Washington and Texas locations.

If Yucca Mountain is found scientifically unsuitable, the Energy Department would report back to Congress. If it passes muster, the department would seek licensing from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The bill also adopts a provision sought by Udall naming a special negotiator who could strike a deal with Nevada or another state that might accept nuclear waste if the price was right. The deal would have to be approved by Congress.

If a financial agreement cannot be worked out, Nevada would receive \$10 million a year after signing for the repository and \$20 million per year once nuclear waste is accepted for burial.

The legislation would authorize studies on the dump's impact on Nevada and also on the potential to bury nuclear waste under the ocean.

Although only several were detailed on the outline of the agreement, Hecht announced the negotiators also accepted 10 amendments he placed on an earlier nuclear waste bill. The amendments deal with nuclear waste package licensing and transportation improvements.

One amendment requires an

evaluation of repository safety in light of the detonations conducted at the Nevada Test Site.

The bill also would give Nevada "special consideration" for siting federal research projects.

That provision drew the most comment during the wrapup session Thursday. Lawmakers from states in the running for the lucrative superconducting supercollider raised objections.

"Why should a state qualify to be the home of the supercollider if they qualify to be the home of nuclear waste," argued Rep. Tim Valentine, D-N.C.

Udall, however, countered it would be "a slap in the face to the people in Nevada not to do this today."

Thursday's agreement addressed concerns of negotiators from Texas and Washington who wanted their states removed from consideration as possible dump sites.

It also soothed lawmakers from the South and East who feared an interim "monitored retrievable storage" (MRS) facility would become the de facto permanent dump.

Negotiators worked that out by closely tying MRS authorization to licensing for the permanent dump in Nevada. The MRS would not be built if the Yucca Mountain site does not get construction approval from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The revamped nuclear waste program comes after years of controversy since Congress passed a law in 1982 setting up a framework to dispose of the nation's high level nuclear waste.

Nevada and a number of other states charged vehemently the Energy Department was breaking the law and injecting politics into the site selection process. Last year, the department announced it would not move towards picking a second dump that was specified in the law.

Jeff German

Democratic bigwigs meet in secret to plan '88 strategy

If there's one thing the Democrats know how to do well, it's bury the hatchet.

That's probably why they're the majority party in the country.

This past Sunday, a small group of high-level Democrats met secretly at the Las Vegas office of Sen. Harry Reid to map out a concerted strategy for the upcoming 1988 campaign.

Yes, unity is the key to this story.

Besides Reid, those attending included: Gov. Richard Bryan, Rep. Jim Bilbray, State Democratic boss Beecher Avants, Clark County leader Laura Kelly Smith and former Gov. Grant Sawyer, the outgoing national committeeman.

It didn't take very long to see the fruits of the one-and-a-half-hour clandestine rap session.

On Tuesday, the likeable Laura Past, who apparently ran into some heated opposition from Bilbray, announced she was not seeking re-



election as the party's national committeewoman.

Word also leaked out that the steady Avants was on solid footing for his own re-election bid in 1988.

And then, the most interesting development of all came about Thursday.

Charlie Waterman, the former county chairman and onetime Reid arch-rival, held a news conference to announce his candidacy for the important national committeeman post being vacated by Sawyer.

Waterman told reporters Reid — of all people — had asked him to run for the job.

That's true. Two years ago, Reid led an unsuccessful charge to dump Waterman as county chairman. Waterman was re-elected but voluntarily stepped down this year.

But this time, the senator outright supported Waterman's campaign when the matter came up for discussion among the Democratic bigwigs.

Just how Reid buried the hatchet with his former nemesis is an intriguing story in itself.

Former Sen. Howard Cannon was everybody's

first choice for national committeeman, according to sources who attended the meeting.

Cannon, the party's senior statesman, wanted to retire from politics with that job under his belt, but he didn't want to have to fight for it.

Reno lawyer Bill Prezant, the only other announced candidate, derailed Cannon's plans, though, when he refused to step aside. Cannon then took himself out of the race.

That put Prezant in the doghouse with the Democratic honchos, who were immensely loyal to Cannon. They decided they could no longer support his candidacy.

In an effort to find someone formidable enough to defeat Prezant, the only logical choice was Waterman, the same guy who had battered Reid in past political battles.

Waterman, who still has his share of enemies in the party, gladly accepted.

Hence, you have the birth of a new era of unity in Democratic circles.

Just how long it lasts is anybody's guess.

They're calling them the "Benedict Arnolds" of Nevada's losing war against the high-level

nuclear dumpsite.

I'm told they're four strong — state Sen. Tom Hickey, D-North Las Vegas; Sen. Dean Rhoads, R-Tuscarora; Sen. Ken Redelsperger, R-Pahrump; and Assemblyman John Marvel, R-Battle Mountain.

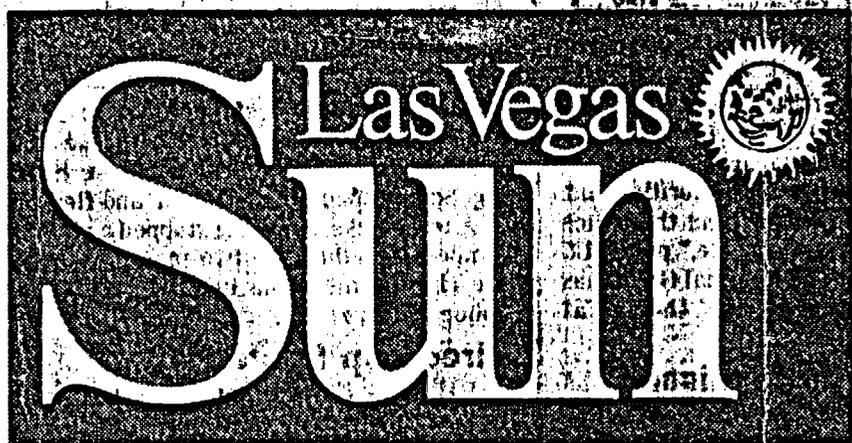
Sources in Carson City and Washington insist the foursome secretly had been courting pro-dump lawmakers on Capitol Hill, among them Sen. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, the author of the "Screw Nevada" bill.

District Attorney Rex Bell, ending his first year in office with flying colors, has been urged by a number of heavyweight Republicans to run for Congress next year.

But the popular DA flat out has told friends he's not interested.

Las Vegas lawyer Roy Garcia, who recently battled North Las Vegas police in court on behalf of a client and won, has had his own troubles with the law in recent months.

But for the moment, he seems to have put his problems behind him.



Friday / Dec. 18, 1987

House/Senate panel agrees nuke dump good for Nevada

By Mary Manning
SUN Staff Writer

House and Senate conferees now being hammered out by a House-Senate conference committee also provides building a monitored retrievable storage facility after Yucca Mountain is licensed for construction. The measure, attached to a \$30.2 billion deficit-reduction bill, dumped the nuclear waste repository on Nevada's Yucca Mountain Thursday, offering the state \$20 million a year to bury thousands of radioactive tons for up to 1,000 years.

The agreement kills preliminary efforts to find possible sites in Texas, Washington, or in eastern states for a second repository. The House and Senate must approve the final bill. The proposal was shaped more by politics than by scientific con-

siderations about the best sites suited for a nuclear waste dump, said Sens. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Chic Hecht, R-Nev. House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, and House Democratic leader Thomas Foley, D-Wash., both were reported as negotiators in the issue. See REID, Page 8A

Reid: Yucca Mountain dump 'a done deal'

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Reid, a staunch opponent of the nation's first nuclear dump coming to Nevada, said he felt "betrayed" by the House.

The \$20 million a year to Nevada is "conscience money from those people who put health and safety at the bottom of the list and put base power politics at the top," Reid said.

"We (Nevada) were run over," the senator said. "It's a done deal."

Reps. James Bilbray, D-Nev., and Barbara Vucanovich, R-Nev., fought side by side by interrupting the conference committee. There were no Nevadans on the committee.

"When I walked into the room, it was clear that they didn't intend to give Nevada a dime," Bilbray said.

Bilbray successfully convinced committee members to support a minimum of \$20 million a year for the 30-year life of the repository. The state will receive \$10 million a year while the dump is under construction.

"I was disgusted to learn that there were those back in Nevada desperately trying to make this a partisan issue," Bilbray said. "At the same time this petty politicking was taking place, Congresswoman Vucanovich and I were fighting side by side for our state to stop this steamroller from running over Nevada."

Hecht is "mad as heck," said Douglas Fuller, the senator's aide. "I feel it unfairly targets Nevada and that makes me very angry. I will not stand by and watch Nevada get rolled," said a Hecht press release. "I plan to fight

against the repository and continue doing everything I can to keep it out of Nevada."

Nevada Gov. Richard Bryan called the measure "a legislative atrocity."

"It blatantly rejects the law of the land, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, and confirms what we have said all along: Nevada was pre-selected as the site for a high-level nuclear waste dump," Bryan said. "This will prove to be a nuclear nightmare for the Congress, an unavoidable and costly mistake that the nation's taxpayers will be forced to finance."

While politicians flexed their muscles, the Energy Department has not begun detailed scientific studies at Yucca Mountain, 60 miles northwest of Las Vegas, to determine whether it is better than either Hanford, Wash., or Deaf Smith County, Texas. Washington and Texas were named along with Nevada in 1986 as finalists in the nuclear dump sweepstakes.

The nuclear waste legislation has been mired in debate for months until a delicate agreement on the temporary "monitored retrievable storage" (MRS) facility was reached Thursday.

The bill orders DOE to drill an exploratory shaft and conduct other studies at Yucca Mountain to determine if it can bury highly

radioactive spent fuel rods from 107 U.S. nuclear reactors in the mountain's volcanic tuff. The rods are now kept in cooling ponds at each nuclear plant.

Nevada Nuclear Projects Director Robert Loux said key concerns by state scientific advisers include groundwater flows and unstable rock that might cause dangerous radioactivity to leak into the environment.

The state claims Yucca Mountain is unsuitable. "We're confident we can disqualify the site," Loux said. "If Yucca Mountain doesn't work, it's the death blow for the industry. If I was in the nuclear industry, I'd be pretty upset and worried."

Nevada Nuclear Commission Chairman Grant Sawyer said he "felt terrible" about the decision. "I'm not surprised, since I've been predicting this very thing for more than a year," he said.

"The question is, do the people of the state have the courage to face formidable odds and the strength to win that battle," Sawyer said.

If Nevada's site proves un-

suitable, the department would report back to Congress for new instructions, a proposition that raised concerns among lawmakers in other states.

"We put all our nuclear eggs in one basket, and if something happens, it sets the nuclear waste industry back 30 years," Loux said. "It's the same nuclear mentality operating out here, that says 'Trust us, the government knows best.'"

"If Nevada isn't it, we are all in deep trouble," said Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo. "Where is this program going to go if this does not work?"

The bill contains provisions sponsored by Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., which allow Congress to pick a negotiator to talk to states about volunteering to host either the permanent repository or the MRS facility.

In addition, the bill specifies that Nevada or other host states be considered for major federal research projects, such as the superconducting supercollider, which has already come under congressional fire during budget talks.