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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director  
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative  
DATE: April 8, 1987  
SUBJECT: Newspaper Articles

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

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## Nevada nuke dump target Panel's proposal OKs drilling at Yucca Mountain

By David Koenig  
Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Yucca Mountain in Nye County should become the nation's top nuclear waste dump, a congressional subcommittee voted Wednesday.

The proposal, by Rep. Marilyn Lloyd, D-Tenn., would authorize

\$93 million for drilling work at Yucca Mountain but provide no money for similar work at potential sites in Washington, Texas and Lloyd's home state of Tennessee.

Lloyd's House Science and Technology subcommittee approved the proposal by voice vote as part of a bill authorizing De-

partment of Energy programs for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The department is conducting the search for a place to bury the nation's most dangerous nuclear waste, but last year congressional critics of DOE succeeded in barring it from doing drilling work in Nevada, Washington and Texas.

The Lloyd proposal has a long way to go. Although staffers say the full House Science and Technology Committee will probably approve the plan, Nevada or other opponents could kill it in another House committee, on the floor, or in the Senate.

Please see NUCLEAR/4A

# Nevada nuclear target

## \$25 billion may be offered state to take dump site

By Christopher Beall  
Review-Journal

Nevada can expect to get the nation's first nuclear waste dump because the state lacks "political clout" in Congress, a congressman from Washington state said Tuesday.

Rep. Sid Morrison, a Republican, also said the nuclear power industry would be willing to pay \$25 billion to whichever state accepts the dump site.

Nevada is one of three states under consideration for the dump site. The other two are Washing-

ton and Texas.

Morrison, who is actively involved in the nuclear waste debate, said the search for the nuclear waste dump has become extremely politicized.

"The whole process has gone awry," Morrison said from his of-

fice in Washington, D.C.

"I don't want to say that this politicization leaves Nevada low man on the totem pole, but your state obviously has little political clout in Washington."

Morrison is the ranking Republican on the Energy and Commerce Committee. Please see NUK 1A

## Nuke

From 1A

A Republican on the House subcommittee that last week passed a recommendation that Yucca Mountain, about 95 miles northwest of Las Vegas, be the only site considered.

That measure, written by the subcommittee chairman whose district includes the proposed site for a temporary nuclear waste repository in Tennessee, ruled out any studies for possible dumps in Tennessee, Washington and Texas.

Rep. Marilyn Lloyd, D-Tenn., said Yucca Mountain is the site most technically suitable for a repository. Her measure called for spending \$93 million to study the site.

Morrison said he disagreed with singling out Nevada.

"It's gone from bad to worse: Political pressures have taken over," he said.

"I think the department opened a political door when they dropped the search for a second-round repository."

Morrison was referring to a deci-

sion made by Energy Secretary John Herrington last year to abandon the search for an Eastern repository.

"The department and the (Reagan) administration opened the political door, and now the Congress has gone through that door making political considerations the deciding factor in the site-selection process," he said.

Nevada officials, most notably Gov. Richard Bryan, have decried this politicization, saying the search was intended to be based solely on scientific considerations.

State officials have called for a revamping of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. Morrison said that he once agreed with those officials.

"But when we talked about revisiting the policy act, it used to be 47 (states) to three (states) because the other states had a 'not-in-my-backyard attitude.'

"Maybe now, the political changes have made the odds closer to 49 to 1," Morrison said.

"My feeling all along has been

that the siting process should be scientific, but if it's going to be political, we should just as well be blatantly political."

Morrison said these political considerations were behind the subcommittee's move to ask Nevada "to name its price" for accepting a repository.

Some Nevada officials have labeled this proposal and another offered in the Senate last week that could amount to a \$5 billion payment to Nevada as a "bribe."

Morrison said he has discussed with the nuclear power industry the idea of giving Nevada an incentive to take the repository. He said the industry would be willing to pay even more than the federal government for the dump.

"Twenty-five billion dollars is what the industry feels they can afford to get the repository," including the dump's construction costs, Morrison said.

Morrison said "one of Nevada's problems is that you have a small delegation."

Wednesday, April 1, 1987  
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LAS VEGAS  
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# Nuclear

From 1A

Lloyd's proposal would also ask Nevada officials to tell Congress what "conditions" would convince them to accept the high-level waste dump for spent nuclear fuel rods.

Earlier Wednesday, two senators introduced legislation offering states \$100 million a year and more in bonuses to accept the dump. That bill's primary author, Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., also hinted again that he believes Yucca Mountain is the best place for the dump, saying "scientists have pointed out Nevada is a very likely site."

The reaction of Nevada lawmakers to both Johnston's bill and Lloyd's targeting of Yucca Mountain was quick and negative.

Rep. Barbara Vucanovich, R-Nev., urged Lloyd in a letter to "put this proposal where it most logically deserves to be, in the wastebasket."

In an interview, Vucanovich said it was a simple case of other states ganging up on Nevada to protect themselves.

"As long as they don't have to have (the dump), they're going to support putting it in Nevada," she said. "Who said Nevada is the only one that should be selected? We have to make them prove that."

Rep. Jim Bilbray, D-Nev., said Lloyd's plan is "obviously a ploy" to kill DOE plans to build a temporary waste dump in Tennessee. To win favors, he suggested, Lloyd also proposed to kill the studies in the other two states being consid-

ered for the permanent dump.

"I think she knows the (House) speaker (Jim Wright) is from Texas and the majority leader (Tom Foley) is from Washington, so she decided to take us on," Bilbray said. "But she's got a tiger by the tail."

Bilbray confidently predicted that neither the Johnston cash award bill or Lloyd's one-site plan will be approved by Congress.

The ultimate fate of Lloyd's proposal is questionable. For one thing, Congress for several years has failed to approve the DOE authorization bill to which it is attached. For another, an aide to the House Science and Technology Committee said the vote was largely a protest.

"I would say the intent of this very dramatic action is to focus attention and say, 'We're frustrated, the nuclear waste program is not working,'" said the aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The aide said the staff on the Energy subcommittee became convinced Yucca Mountain is the safest dump site after "hearing that repeatedly" from DOE and scientists who have testified at congressional hearings.

In a report explaining its action, the subcommittee said Yucca Mountain "is the best site for hosting a repository and it is already in an isolated area contaminated through nuclear weapons testing."

The report further suggested Nevada should be asked "to define the conditions under which it would

welcome the highly controversial repository."

Utility customers who depend on nuclear power are paying for the troubled waste program, and they will save "billions of dollars" if a dump is found quickly — freeing money to pay off Nevada, the report suggests.

According to a spokesman, Lloyd was influenced by a Stanford University scientist who suggested to her panel last week that all work focus on Yucca Mountain.

Geochemist and professor emeritus Konrad Krauskopf noted then that the Texas site sits on top of an aquifer tapped by farmers, and the Washington site is atop aquifers leading to the Columbia River.

But at Yucca Mountain the repository would be 600 meters above the water table, in a sparsely populated area already partially contaminated by fallout from nuclear testing, the scientist said, drawing from government studies. He added that it would be cheaper to build the dump at Yucca Mountain than at the other two sites — a conclusion drawn by DOE.

"For all these reasons, Yucca Mountain would be the obvious choice if a single site were to be picked for characterization and probable ultimate acceptance," Krauskopf said.

The scientist said Congress should be willing to scrap the Yucca Mountain site if it is proven unsafe — "an obvious weakness" in proceeding with studying only one site.

# Nevada officials condemn nuclear waste repository plan

By Christopher Beall  
Review-Journal

Nevada officials condemned proposals announced in Washington Wednesday that would single out Nevada as the best site for a nuclear waste repository, saying that some politicians in Washington appear to be ganging up on the state.

A wide cross-section of Nevadans condemned a proposal by a Tennessee congressman that would make Nevada the only site under consideration for a nuclear waste dump.

But other Nevadans applauded an offer made Wednesday by a senior Louisiana senator for as much as \$5 billion to the state that accepts the nuclear waste dump.

Gov. Richard Bryan condemned both proposals saying they are a further attempt to force Nevada into accepting the repository regardless of safety considerations.

"It kind of sounds like a conspiracy," Bryan said.

"I think it's clear that they are trying to target us."

"It is fair to say the U.S. Department of Energy's site selection process has been so corrupted that even before the studies are completed, they have already decided that Nevada is the best site," Bryan said.

"This is just another example of politicians in Washington putting political considerations ahead of scientific and technical considerations."

The reaction to Wednesday's events came after two setbacks to Nevada's efforts to avoid a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, the site the Energy Department has labeled the most technically suitable for a nuclear waste dump.

During a morning press conference, Sen. W. Bennett Johnston, Democratic chairman of the energy committee, announced a plan to offer the first state that accepts a nuclear waste dump a \$5 billion

**Quotable**

It kind of sounds like a conspiracy. I think it's clear that they are trying to target us.

— Gov. Richard Bryan

payment during the course of the program.

Later in the day, a subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee passed a measure that would stop all work at possible dump sites in Washington, Texas and Tennessee. Funds for the Yucca Mountain site would be all that remain for the Energy Department's repository program.

"On the one hand the federal government is trying to bribe us into taking the dump," Lt. Gov. Bob Miller said Wednesday.

"And then with the other hand, there is this bullying from the government and people like Representative (Marilyn) Lloyd."

Lloyd is the Democratic congressman from Tennessee who sponsored the legislation naming Yucca Mountain as the best site in the country.

Miller said both the Lloyd and Johnston proposals sidestep federal requirements, passed by Congress in 1982, for the nuclear waste dump to be certified safe for up to 10,000 years.

"These proposals are at best premature, and at worst irresponsible," he said.

Bob Dickinson, a Las Vegas closely involved with the nuclear waste dump process said he was disturbed by the Lloyd proposal, but he supports Johnston's offer. Dickinson is with the Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee, which supports continued Energy Department work on Yucca Mountain.

"If it (the nuclear dump) is safe and we can assure that it works, then I'm sure the governor could find some way to put the money into economic development and build the second industry that our state badly needs," Dickinson said.

Dickinson said he agreed with Lloyd's contention that Yucca Mountain is the best site for the nuclear waste dump, but he said the government should do more studies to confirm that theory.

Nye County's Administrator Jan Wellman, who would have the nuclear waste dump in his backyard if it was located at Yucca Mountain, said public opinion in the county has opposed the dump. But the county commission has refused to take a stand on the issue.

He said the nuclear dump could represent millions of dollars in new jobs and an increased tax base for the financially strapped county.

"We've lived with the possibility of a dump for so long now that if it happened, it would just be a fact of life for us," Wellman said. "The enticement they are dangling out there isn't really going to change anyone's mind."

A spokesman for a Nevada activist group, Citizen Alert, condemned both measures saying they singled out Nevada, and that Lloyd's bill "is a big, fat lie."

Bob Fulkerson, executive director of the grass roots environmental group, said Lloyd's proposal represents that same view that others in Washington have expressed that Nevada is "a vast desert wasteland available for use as the nation's dumping ground."

He said both the Johnston and Lloyd proposals demonstrated the frustration the nuclear waste program has brought to Congress.

"It shows the deep state of chaos and disarray that the program is in," he said. "Clearly these proposals are coming from parochial interests, and they are just short-term political solutions."