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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director  
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative  
DATE: May 6, 1987  
SUBJECT: Newspaper Article

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

PTP:nan

WM Record File

102

WM Project

Docket No.

PDR

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## Opinion

# Bullfrog scheme is a power grab

If two state legislators get their way, there will be a new county in Nevada: Bullfrog County, population zero. The new county would include Yucca Mountain and that nuclear waste site the feds want to build there.

There are no people in the proposed Bullfrog County. Neither are there bullfrogs.

The name was dreamed up early in this century by a couple of prospectors who took note of a greenish material resembling the skin of a bullfrog — on the hills in the area. Thus the Bullfrog Hills, the Bullfrog Mining District and the onetime gold mining boom town of Bullfrog, just south of Rhyolite.

In 1909 there surfaced in the Nevada Legislature a bill to create Bullfrog County, which would have encompassed the mining district. The bill died.

Now, the ghost of Bullfrog County arises.

The new Bullfrog County is the brainchild of Assemblyman Paul May and Sen. Tom Hickey, both North Las Vegas Democrats.

As we understand it, Bullfrog County is a device contrived to capture federal money for the state.

See, Yucca Mountain lies within Nye County. Nye County is probably the only county in the state where many people are willing to accept the site with open arms because of the jobs it will bring. But the nuclear waste site will also strain such Nye County public resources as the school system, which would be burdened by the influx of children of nuclear waste site workers.

So, Nye County officialdom has been looking ahead, trying to figure out ways to coax the federal government for as much money as possible in exchange for gracefully accepting the nuclear waste dump.

Anticipating the coming of the dump, Nye County officials dreamed up a plan of annexing Yucca Mountain to the town of Amargosa Valley, thus boosting the property tax rate in the area by 70 percent. No one would be affected by the tax hike, except the federal government, if it decides to dig the dump there.

Under federal law, the local government which eventually gets the site will be awarded Energy Department grants equal to the amount of property and business taxes it would have had to pay if the Energy Department were a private company. Nye County could receive millions of dollars annually from these grants.

But Nye County's creative tax plan may be pulled out from under it by the Bullfrog County scheme.

Because there are no residents in the proposed Bullfrog County, a 12-member Legislative Committee, made up of state senators and assemblymen, would appoint the Bullfrog County Commission, and the new county would be administered from its "county seat" in Carson City. In other words, the Legislature would control the new county and the state would scoop up the grant money.

Nye County officials contend that the Bullfrog County scheme is unfair, motivated by greed.

It is true, however, that Nye County would not be the only county affected by the dump. Clark County would probably be even more heavily affected because many of the new workers can be expected to locate, not in one of the tiny towns of Nye County, but rather in urbanized Clark County.

So perhaps it is wise that the counties affected share the expected tax windfall.

But there are problems with this Bullfrog proposal. For one thing, the federal grants program was designed to benefit local governments impacted by the site — not state governments. For another, it leaves distribution of the money up to the whim of the Legislature, and there is no guarantee that Nye County will even get a piece of the funds.

Lastly, if this legislation is passed, a new county with no inhabitants will be created immediately. What if the federal government decides not to put the dump at Yucca Mountain? Nevada would have created, to no purpose, an empty new county administered from Carson City, 270 miles away.

It is hard to view the Bullfrog County proposal as anything but a power grab and a scheme of questionable sincerity.