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Amodei expects new push for Yucca



Congressman Mark Amodei in Carson City on Friday.

With the retirement of Sen. Harry Reid, Rep. Mark Amodei says he sees another push to open Yucca Mountain on the horizon.

In an interview during last week's congressional recess, he said Illinois Republican John Shimkus is "getting ready to have a hearing on Yucca Mountain."

Amodei said he has been told by colleagues in leadership in discussions with the Senate leadership, "there have been indications that some things will change in the Senate with respect to Yucca Mountain."

"It's all in the context of Harry retiring," he said.

Amodei said if the bill just pushes forward on Yucca Mountain, he's a "No" vote.

But, he said if that bill includes such things as land transfers and other economic development issues and other benefits to Nevada, "I'm going to have that discussion."

"I don't think Nevada should sit there like Clint Eastwood at the convention talking to an empty chair," he said. "What can we do that's meaningful for Nevada."

He said his idea would include making the Desert Research Institute the watchdog over management of the site and making UNLV into the "world wide leader in reprocessing the fuel so it becomes a commodity instead of trash."

He said one of his ideas is the federal government, "convey to the state the right of way for I-11."

"Those discussions haven't been had but I'm willing to have them as part of moving something," the Carson City native said.

Interstate 11 is a proposed freeway that would connect Arizona all the way north to the Canadian border, running through Nevada. But officials concede it would probably take decades to plan, win environmental approvals and build.

"If you already own the right of way, that's a big step," Amodei said.

The state has successfully prevented the waste dump 75 miles north of Las Vegas from opening for more than 30 years through an endless succession of legal battles and the efforts of the state's congressional delegation. But it was Reid who convinced President Obama to defund the project in his energy Department budget, effectively killing it, and Reid as majority then minority leader has continued to frustrate efforts by backers of the so-called repository.

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