

March 7, 2007

Nev. senators introduce No Yucca bill

Nevada's two U.S. senators have introduced legislation keeping nuclear waste where it is produced, a bill that could stop the Yucca Mountain Project.

The Federal Accountability for Nuclear Waste Storage Act of 2007 was introduced Tuesday by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat, and Sen. John Ensign, a Republican.

Also Tuesday, the U.S. Energy Department sent legislation to Congress to move the Yucca Mountain Project forward; the same bill was stalled last year.

"As elected leaders, we have a moral responsibility to protect the thousands of Nevadans and millions of Americans that could be put in harm's way because of projects like proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump," Reid said in a statement.

Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, has been designated as the repository for nuclear waste created by U.S. nuclear plants and weapons. But the program has been set back by scientific controversy, opposition from Congress, the Nevada government and anti-Yucca groups, as well as funding cuts orchestrated by Reid.

"The next step forward is to secure nuclear waste in scientifically sound ways at the sites where it is produced," he said.

Nuclear plants currently store it on-site and industry officials have said it is safe.

The federal government has the task of taking possession of nuclear waste and the bill would force the government to do so but not send it to the Nevada mountain. Instead the government would operate on-site storage facilities, including safety and security of the spent fuel.

"We must look for long-term innovative solutions to recycle waste produced by nuclear power, and as we look for these solutions, we should not transport dangerous waste through cities and rural areas across our nation to Yucca Mountain," Ensign said.