

Title: ERA OF EASY MONEY ENDS
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Jane Baughman's March 5 letter to the editor calls for a response. Ms. Baughman is the wife of Mike Baughman, the consultant who made hundreds of thousands of dollars from the nuclear waste gravy train before Congress recently pulled the plug on local government grants. Together, the Baughmans operate Intertech Services Corp., which has contracts with a number of local governments, including the city of Caliente. The city of Caliente has paid the Baughmans big money to attend meetings with entities such as the Department of Energy and for their advice on how to solicit megabuck grants from the federal government.

It was here that Mr. Baughman's advice put his clients in Lincoln County at cross purposes with the citizens of the state of Nevada. Nevada has a law that makes it unlawful to store high-level radioactive waste within its borders. The storage of such dangerous waste is a matter of state-wide concern, and local governments do not have authority to make decisions in conflict with state law. Nevertheless, after having been forewarned against such a course, a majority of the Lincoln County commissioners and the Caliente City Council approved a resolution in February 1995 which was intended to sell out the state.

The resolution invited the federal government to construct and operate facilities in Lincoln County for the storage and handling of high-level radioactive waste in exchange for a yearly payment by the federal government of millions of dollars to Lincoln County and Caliente.

The attorney general's complaint, filed on March 20, 1995, invited these officials into the district court of Lincoln County to explain why they should not be removed from office for usurping the prerogatives of the citizens of the whole state. Eventually they saw the errors of their ways, capitulated and rescinded the objectionable resolution and the matter was closed.

It appears that Ms. Baughman protests too much. Far from being an abuse of power, it would have been an abdication of power for the attorney general to have ignored the unlawful scheme to victimize the citizens of the state.

Ms. Baughman's charge that the recent legislative audit of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office suggests a disregard for state policies and regulations is unfounded. During fiscal year '94-95, the office spent 87 percent of its contracting budget to fund Nevada universities, local governments, tribal entities and other state agencies including the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

The audit also took exception to a procedure the office uses to identify experts as contractors on the basis of their experience and training. The Nuclear Waste Project Office uses a competitive request for qualifications to identify special competence and qualifications which the state needs in its oversight of the Yucca Mountain project.

The success of the office in this regard, as much as any other factor, has convinced Congress to cut funding for the Yucca Mountain project and, according to DOE's Nevada Yucca Mountain project manager, to ramp down and zero out all operations at the site by 1998.

Jane Baughman's real complaint appears to be that the Congress' reduction of funds for the project means that the era of easy money for Intertech Services is over. Maybe the Baughmans will have to get real jobs, like most Nevadans.

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