



**Department of Geosciences**

Oregon State University

104 Wilkinson Hall • Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5506

Tel: (541) 737-1201 • Fax: (541) 737-1200 • [www.geo.oregonstate.edu](http://www.geo.oregonstate.edu)

March 16, 2011

Dr. Milton Glick, President  
Dr. Jeff Thompson, Dean of the College of Science  
University of Nevada Reno

Dear Drs. Glick and Thompson:

We write as the Minerals and Energy Resources Section (MERS) of the Board of Natural Resources of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), the largest national advocacy group for U.S. universities. We are concerned about the March 8 announcement by UNR that proposes to cut the budget of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG) by \$1.1 million from a base budget of \$2.1 million. We believe that this is not in the interest of the State of Nevada nor of the country and urge you not to cut the budget as it risks destroying a prime asset of the State.

As members of the APLU national committee charged with research associated with energy and minerals we observe that NBMG has had, and can continue to have, broad public impact. Compared with other surveys, NBMG is remarkably successful in leveraging state support via significant extramural funds. This is an enviable record that should be emulated by other states. The NBMG serves a vital role in providing applied science that directly impacts the economy of the State of Nevada through publication of high quality geologic maps and peer-reviewed scientific articles. This science contributes directly to Nevada's natural resource production and land management decisions.

Nevada's economy is enriched by natural resources that include a vibrant geothermal energy program, petroleum, industrial minerals, and gold-silver deposits, the latter that has contributed \$230 billion over the past 35 years and makes Nevada a leading gold-producer in the world. As these gold deposits are exhausted new discoveries are essential. To this end research by NBMG has made fundamental scientific contributions (e.g., Muntean and others, 2011, in Nature-Geosciences) including geologic maps of mineral districts. No other organization provides these data, which are essential to long-term sustainability of this industry (and to meet many other societal needs). New gold deposits are hidden, state-of-the-art research and advanced geological thinking are essential to find more ores.

Geothermal systems comprise another of Nevada's natural competitive advantages – a source of green and sustainable low-cost energy. As with minerals, NBMG leads in providing geological insight throughout the Great Basin and the expertise to support Nevada-based exploration (e.g., NBMG Map 161, Nevada Geothermal Resources, 2010) and development. Beyond mineral resources and geothermal energy, NBMG directly supports other themes of direct economic interest to the state, including Nevada's petroleum resources, the geologic implications of the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, and the State's essential but limited water resources.

Recognizing these contributions and their long-term importance to Nevada, we urge that NBMG funding be sustained at \$2.1 million, particularly given a demonstrated 2 for 1 multiplier effect through external research grants on topics of immediate and lasting value. If implemented, the proposed cuts in funding have the potential to destroy one of Nevada's premier technological assets, something that cannot be easily rebuilt when better times return.

Sincerely,

Dr. John H. Dilles, Past-Chair of MERS  
Professor of Geology (Mineral Resources)

Dr. Mark D. Barton, Past-Chair of MERS  
Professor of Geology  
Assoc. Director, Institute for Mineral Resources  
University of Arizona

Dr. Jean Cline, Chair of MERS  
Professor of Geology  
University of Nevada Las Vegas