

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DIVISION OF GEOLOGICAL AND PLANETARY SCIENCES
Mail Stop 100-23 Pasadena, California 91125

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Jeffrey S. Thompson, Dean
College of Science
University of Nevada

March 15, 2011

Dear Dr. Thompson,

As a geologist and educator with deep research experience in Nevada, I write to ask for your support in maintaining the State's current \$2.1 M/yr budget for the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. As you are aware, the current plan is to reduce the budget by 52%, putting the viability of the institution at great risk.

My argument for maintaining funding for the bureau is simple: it plays an indispensable role in the Nevada economy, in service to industry and to the protection of both public and private infrastructure. The mineral industry, especially precious metals, has the strategic virtue of remaining strong during recessionary times, an important hedge for a state economy that is under-diversified. Effectively shuttering the Bureau would be a huge setback for this strategic sector. We're talking about a million dollars that undergirds a billion-dollar, job-rich industry. The Bureau does things that the industry just can't do. It would be hard to send a stronger signal to potential investors that Nevada isn't being serious about the industry.

The cuts will also decimate an internationally known program in geological hazards assessment, in a state whose primary population centers are prone to large earthquakes, catastrophic flooding, and severe drought. One need only compare the outcome of earthquakes in societies with a sophisticated interest in hazards mitigation (most infrastructure intact, loss of life hundreds to thousands) to those without such interest (most infrastructure destroyed, loss of life hundreds *of* thousands), to get an idea of the economic direction in which these cuts will propel the Nevada economy in the long run.

Sincerely yours,



Brian P. Wernicke
Chandler Family Professor of Geology

