

Yucca contract to get review by Energy Department

Las Vegas Review-Journal
STEPHENS WASHINGTON BUREAU
Dec. 13, 2007

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Energy inspector general on Wednesday agreed to review a legal services contract for Yucca Mountain after Nevada lawmakers charged that the firm granted the work might have conflicts of interest.

The law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius was awarded a four-year, \$47.7 million contract in September to handle licensing for the planned nuclear waste repository. The contract also carries options for five more years that could bring its total value to \$108.89 million.

Nevada officials have challenged the contract. Attorneys with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius have represented nuclear utilities suing the government in Yucca-related nuclear waste cases. The firm in 2001-02 also registered representatives as lobbyists for the Nuclear Energy Institute, a leading pro-Yucca organization.

"Morgan, Lewis has a long history of working for the nuclear industry to force the dump on Nevadans, and it is laughable to think that this law firm can now provide DOE with objective advice required to serve the public interest," Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., said in announcing the probe.

Representatives for inspector general Gregory Friedman met Tuesday with aides to Nevada lawmakers. Investigators said the review could take four or five months, according to officials in the meeting.