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Drs. Glick and Johnson  
President, Provost  
University of Nevada  
Reno NV

Dear Drs. Glick and Johnson:

The recent earthquake disaster and the continuing nuclear disaster in Japan remind us all that natural hazards can strike at any time, and that their effects can be compounded by breakdowns in engineered systems. Money spent on the science of hazard mapping and assessment is an excellent long-term investment.

Nevada also faces important hazards. Earthquakes with magnitude up to 8 are possible anywhere, but are most likely in the populous western parts of the state. Volcanism, though historically quiet, could be renewed at any time (as illustrated by the magmatic character of the 2003 swarm near Tahoe). Radioactive groundwaters emanating from NTS need to be monitored and managed. Many micro-ecosystems throughout the state are likely to be challenged, and possibly damaged, by climate change.

For these reasons, I have been very pleased to see the recent modernization and diversification of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology beyond its traditional roles. Recent hires have brought in modern Earth scientists (that is, applied physicists with computer skills) who are able to turn out world-class research in such diverse areas as geodesy, earthquake hazards, and lithospheric stress (just to mention those which I am most familiar with).

I am therefore distressed to hear of a proposal to radically cut the budget of NBMG and restructure it as part of the university system. As a disinterested (out-of-state) university professor with 35 years experience, I foresee large hidden costs: Politics, new administrative burdens, and new duties could easily displace more than a year's progress in research. The loss in research progress would be reflected in a loss of external (federal) research support, which takes years to rebuild. And there is danger that the best minds might leave for other states, causing a loss in quality and capability proportionately much greater than the savings achieved.

Sincerely yours,

*Peter Bird*

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