

Statement of Rep. Shelley Berkley (NV-01)
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
HR 1311, the Nevada Cancer Institute Expansion Act
October 23, 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you and Ranking Member Bishop for holding this hearing. The Nevada Cancer Institute Expansion Act, which I introduced along with my Nevada colleagues Jon Porter and Dean Heller, would transfer a vacant 80-acre parcel of land in the western part of my congressional district from the BLM to the City of Las Vegas, which would use the site for a non-profit cancer treatment facility, related commercial projects, a cancer survivors' park, a flood control project, and a water pumping facility.

This piece of land is part of a larger 320-acre site on which the City has held a Recreation and Public Purposes patent from BLM since 1963. Angel Park and the Angel Park Golf Club cover most of the site, but the 80 acres in question have remained unused. With residential development now surrounding the site and available land in the Las Vegas Valley becoming increasingly scarce, the future of this site has become an issue of great importance to my community.

Under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, which governs federal land disposal in the Las Vegas Valley, the City could nominate this site for public auction to the highest bidder. But I do not believe that the uncontrolled development resulting from such a sale would be in the best interests of the community. As an alternative, the City has proposed a plan that would benefit area residents, would advance the world-class cancer research being done by the non-profit Nevada Cancer

Institute, and would still provide revenue from the sale of land for commercial use.

My bill would allow the City to transfer approximately 25 acres to the Nevada Cancer Institute, recently designated as our State's official cancer institute by the Nevada Legislature. Any commercial development on the remainder of the site would be ancillary to the Cancer Institute, such as medical offices. The City could sell portions of the land for that purpose only at full market value, and all proceeds would go to the special account set up under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. In addition, the City plans to develop a cancer survivors' park, maintain an existing flood control channel, and provide for the expansion of a water pumping station.

Not so long ago, this site was on the outskirts of town, far removed from populated areas. But with the population explosion we have experienced in recent years, the housing boom has pushed development to all corners of the Las Vegas Valley, well beyond the area in question. Disposal of this piece of land in the middle of the City presents us with a unique challenge, and I believe Congress has a responsibility to consider this innovative solution.

I would also like to voice my support for the Orchard Detention Basin Flood Control Act, just described by Mr. Porter. Flash flooding is a constant danger in Las Vegas, and this bill will help the Clark County Regional Flood Control District protect our community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss these important issues for our state.