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PRESS RELEASE

March 31, 2003

Harry Mortenson 775 684-8803

A bill before the state legislature that would have created a stewardship program to help protect Nevada's cultural resources has been withdrawn by its sponsor, Assemblyman Harry Mortenson, (D-Las Vegas). Mortenson, the author of AB131, is confident, however, that the objectives of the bill will be achieved.

Mortenson said that most of the people who testified at hearings on the bill supported its goals. However, certain representatives of the mining industry objected to two words: *traditional* and *damage* in AB131. Additional meetings held to try to produce language that was acceptable to all parties did not resolve the differences of opinion but did result in opening up other avenues to accomplish the same goals.

"I want to make sure that Nevada's many cultural resources are preserved and protected for future generations," Mortenson said, "and that vandalism and damage to historic sites are prevented."

A strong proponent of the need to increase public awareness of the significance and value of the state's vast cultural resources, Mortenson said he will be working closely with Ron James, Administrator of the Office of Historic Preservation of the Department of Cultural Affairs on ways to implement the program.

"I am confident that this stewardship program can be implemented to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. I will ask our congressional delegation for assistance in obtaining federal funds to implement the program. We will also seek funds from private, non-profit sources," Mortenson said.

A strong proponent of the need to increase public awareness of the significance and value of the state's cultural resources, Mortenson said he is encouraged by the amount of public support and pleased that efforts to put into operation the provisions of the bill will move forward.