

Reid announces Hoover Dam hearing

U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., on June 23 announced the Senate Appropriations Committee will hold a congressional hearing to study the cost overruns at the Hoover Dam Visitor Center.

Reid began investigating exorbitant building costs for the visitor center after meeting with residents two years ago.

Ratepayers in Overton, Logandale, Moapa, and other areas told Reid they were concerned that costs were being passed along through their utility bills.

The center was originally slated to cost \$32 million. Latest completion estimates are near \$120 million. Some of these costs are being passed along to South-

ern Nevada residents who use Hoover Dam power including Nevada Power Co., Reid determined.

Reid, a member of the Appropriations Committee, said a congressional hearing would uncover the reason for the large overruns.

"The Appropriations Committee earmarked money 10 years

ago, and in subsequent years, for the center," Reid said. "The committee is responsible for making sure all funds are accounted for and spent wisely."

"I have no doubt the center will be good for Nevada tourism, but large overruns and a \$15 million parking lot raises questions about accountability."

In September of last year, Reid offered an amendment to the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Bill asking for a probe. The amendment passed and the Interior Department launched an internal investigation earlier this year that is nearing completion.

Reid said the Appropriations Committee hearing will be held once the Interior report is finished so that the findings can be submitted for the record. Reid has held several meetings with Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Dan Beard to discuss the situation. The Bureau of Reclamation is the agency within the Interior Department responsible for overseeing Hoover Dam and its new visitor center.

Included in the \$120 million-plus facility is a \$15 million parking lot, a \$16 million elevator, and a 400-plus seat theater on an electric rotating platform. The center was authorized in 1984.