

Nevada governor wants to eliminate landfills in state

Nov. 9 -- Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons wants to eliminate landfills in the state and instead recycle as much waste as possible and use the rest to generate energy.

"There have been huge leaps in recycling technology," said Gibbons, a Republican. "We can conserve natural resources, create clean energy and create jobs by looking at landfills not as places where we bury our trash, but as places where recycling and energy recovery begin."

Gibbons, in announcing what he called a "major initiative" Nov. 6, said he plans to propose legislation that would reward the waste industry for superior performance in recycling and energy recovery. The measure also will include various incentives, including tax abatements, to encourage businesses to locate in Nevada and use recycled materials in their operations. He also plans to develop plans for offering low-cost financing to help businesses build waste recovery facilities.

Gibbons said current recycling and renewable energy technology should allow solid waste companies to divert at least 75% of the waste that currently ends up in Nevada landfills. He cited San Jose, Calif., which boasts a high diversion rate, as a role model for Nevada.

The governor's announcement did not include a timetable for eliminating landfills "as we presently know them."

"Mandated waste recovery can be a significant part of diversifying our economy and provide much needed jobs," Gibbons said.

Gibbons pledged that he would not allow Nevada to become the "landfill of the West," and said he has been in contact with Waste Management Inc. and Republic Services Inc. officials, which operate landfills in Washoe and Clark counties respectively, about increasing efforts to reduce landfill waste.

"I am pleased that they understand the need to do a better job of protecting our environment, and that they have agreed to work with us for the benefit of Nevada," Gibbons said.

Republic Services is anxious to learn details about the governor's plan, company spokesman Will Flower said. Managing solid waste to protect the environment and public health entails a balanced approach, which includes the use of landfills along with recycling and energy recovery projects, he said.

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