
Interview: State Sen. Joseph Neal



Campaigning for Governor With FDR-Democrat Policies

Nevada State Sen. Joe Neal (D-North Las Vegas), is expected easily to win the September Democratic Party primary for Gubernatorial candidate, and is campaigning to unseat the incumbent, Republican Gov. Kenny Guinn, in November. Neal was interviewed on July 10 by Marcia Merry Baker.

EIR: Senator, you are a 30-year veteran legislator in Nevada, and a nationally and internationally well-known civil rights leader—"legendary" is what the *Las Vegas Sun* calls your record on civil rights. Everyone in the Nevada media has described you as the person with the biggest name recognition to run against Governor Guinn. You describe your candidacy as that of an "FDR Democrat." Lyndon LaRouche is saying internationally, that this "FDR" approach is just what the United States requires.

But, the Democratic Party in Nevada is trying to ignore you out of existence! Omit your famous name from their press releases. The AFL-CIO union recently endorsed the incumbent Guinn, who is not only Republican, but a right-to-work Governor!

Neal: Yes, I filed for the governorship at the last few minutes of filing [on May 21], and I guess, that kind of caught everybody off guard. The Democrats were not putting up a candidate against the Governor. Of course, after I filed, they put out a press release, and they put the person who is running for the Lieutenant Governor at the top of the press release, and they left my name off. And I can understand that.

See, we do not have a Democratic Party as such in this state, or a Republican Party. We have what we call the "Gaming Party" out here. I was running on issues that the Gaming people disliked—that is, to increase their taxes, to go for growth.

Of course, the increase in the taxes is based upon the fact that the gamblers—the "gamers" as we call them—bring in something on the average of about 49 million tourists a year, and when those tourists are in the state here, they are temporary residents, utilizing all of the services that the permanent residents use, such as police protection, health-care, roads, water resources, and the like.

We do not get compensated for those services, because the money that the tourists bring in to the state, goes to the gaming industry, and we tax that industry based upon a three-tier system: The first \$50,000, gross revenue per month, is taxed at 3%. The next \$84,000 is taxed at 4%. And over

\$134,000 is taxed at 6.25%. That rate has not been raised since 1987. I was part of the group that forced that particular increase at that particular time. I was on the Taxation Committee.

EIR: I guess tourism increased greatly over the 1990s; is that right?

Neal: Yes. So, when the tourists come in, as I indicated, they become temporary residents. They stretch our resources—such as police protection, or health care, or other things of that sort—then that cost is borne by the population base of the state, of about 2 million people. The gamers take all of the money.

The tourists, in 2001, brought in a gross amount of approximately \$18 billion. And \$9.6 billion of that was in the gaming area alone. And \$6.2 billion was from coin-operated machines—the slot machines and the poker machines, which are not labor intensive at all. It is that \$9.6 billion that we want to tax. That's the winnings. But the gamers do not want that. And I'm one of the candidates that have always been pushing—even in the Senate, you know—that they should pay more.

EIR: I understand that in 1998, when you ran for governor, you had a petition drive on this taxing matter.

Neal: Oh, yes. It's not a new issue with me. For the last four years in the legislature, we tried to test that. And of course, as I said, we have a Gaming Party. They utilize their money and influence to keep anything, such as taxes, from happening to them.

EIR: I understand that it was in 1931, that the first state approval of gambling occurred, and yet, in the 1930s Nevada was also famous worldwide for building the Hoover Dam. So you had two things going on simultaneously: You were going to be a world leader for infrastructure, and at the same time Nevada became famous, over the decades, for gambling. But your infrastructure base is now in a precarious state, is it not? There is extensive drought right now. The Colorado River and other basins are low.

Neal: That is true. And you can't do anything about that unless you have some funds to do it. And when you have an industry that is bringing in billions in your state, and you are paying them to make those billions, and you are not getting

anything for it, then the chances of trying to do any infrastructure projects, are almost nil. Because then you are forced to tax your own population, which is already been stretched too thin in terms of taxation.

EIR: In your own policy leadership, let's look at what you have been spotlighting. Take energy: You have said the Federal government has a role to regulate power. You've campaigned for that outside Nevada, even in Mexico.

Neal: You have to have that. And even with an interest such as gambling, you have to have regulations on that, too.

EIR: On energy, there is still a shortage question; there was

a Stage One blackout alert yesterday in California. I think the electricity wholesale market price went up to \$27 a megawatt-hour, up from \$10.50, just this week. So what are you doing to keep this in the forefront, the way you have done in the past?

Neal: Turning back deregulation is one of the issues of the campaign. It's a very popular issue. In fact, the County Commission tried to strip that issue from me, by putting it on the ballot as a referendum in Clark County, to create a public energy utility to handle electricity. It is merely asking the voters, if they actually want it. But, I think it was as a result of that being a part of my platform. Those guys were somewhat connected with the established folks here; they were trying to deprive me of that particular issue.

Nuclear Waste Isn't Waste, It's a Valuable Resource!

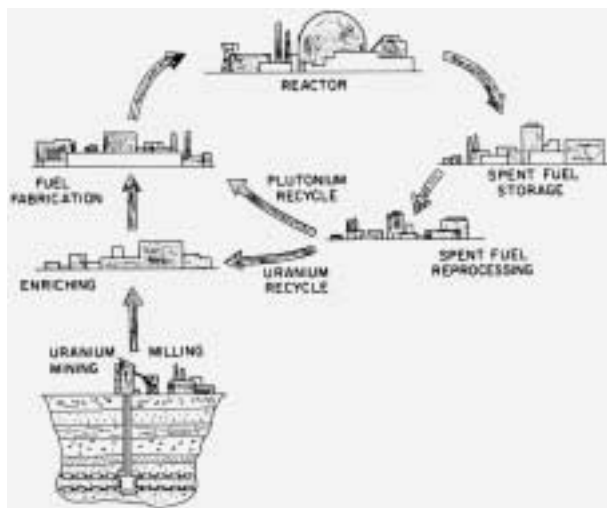
From the beginning of the civilian nuclear program in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was assumed that nations would develop the entire nuclear fuel cycle—mining uranium, enriching it and fabricating it into fuel, burning it in reactors, and then removing the spent fuel and reprocessing it into new fuel (with valuable isotopes as a by-product). In fact, nuclear energy is the only truly “renewable” energy source, and this renewability makes nuclear power an inexpensive source of electricity.

More than 96% of the so-called “waste” from spent nuclear fuel can be reprocessed to be reused as uranium or plutonium fuel. The remaining 4%, which is called high-level waste, can also be “mined”; that is separated into constituent elements, using advanced isotope separation technologies. Not doing so is a terrible waste of available energy.

To give you an idea of what we are wasting: The spent fuel produced by a single 1,000 megawatt nuclear plant over its 40-year lifetime, is equal to the energy in 130 million barrels of oil, or 37 million tons of coal, plus strategic metals and other valuable isotopes that could be retrieved from the high-level waste.

Why We Don't Reprocess

The enormous potential of nuclear power to uplift the world's poor by industrializing the Third World, made it a prime target for the anti-population “utopian” faction. By the late 1960s, the newly created environmentalist movement was demonizing nuclear energy, and scaring an increasingly scientifically illiterate public into anti-nuclearism. The United States, which pioneered reprocessing,



The nuclear fuel cycle.

shut down its capability during the Carter Administration, leaving reprocessing to Canada, France, Great Britain, and Russia (plus the countries they service, including Japan, which is developing its own reprocessing capability). In subsequent years, new methods of isotope separation using lasers, such as the AVLIS program at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, were also shut down or lost funding.

As a result, today we have more than 20,000 metric tons of spent fuel stored at U.S. nuclear plants, with the plans to move it to permanent storage at the Yucca Mountain site embroiled in a political battle defined by fear. Can nuclear waste be safely stored in a repository like that of Yucca Mountain? Technologically speaking, the answer is yes. But why should we incur the billions of dollars of expense to immobilize what is actually billions of dollars worth of nuclear fuel that could be supplying electricity in the years to come?

—Marjorie Mazel Hecht

EIR: There are other issues associated with your name, such as necessary social infrastructure—hospitals and health care.

Neal: Yes. As you know, the doctors in our Level One trauma center, particularly the orthopedic surgeons, walked out a week ago, and they kind of hamstrung the community with that walkout. Of course, I was opposed to that; I had even issued a press release asking that the present Governor invoke his emergency powers. This is at the University Medical Center in Las Vegas, which serves the surrounding area here, for a radius of about 400 miles. It is shut down now. We no longer have a Level One trauma center operating at the present time.

So I had asked the Governor to invoke his emergency powers to keep it open, even if the doctors didn't come back, to get the medical personnel from the National Guard, and also ask the military, which is located here, if they could participate in helping out with this problem, until we could work out a situation with the doctors, and the trial lawyers, and the insurance companies. These are the three major parties that are involved. The fourth party would be the people who actually need the services, which I'm concerned about.

There seems to be a little movement now, you know, toward trying to do something, because the Governor's solution was a long-term solution—that is, calling a special legislative session to deal with this issue. But my position is, it would not help a child who was in need of the service now, to call a legislative session to try to put some caps on award damages received by attorneys.

EIR: You have been campaigning on the question of the death penalty—that there shouldn't be more "studies" and "analyses," that we should take action to stop it.

Neal: I've been opposed to the death penalty ever since I've been in the legislature. I haven't supported anything like that. . . . We had a study committee come out of the last session, because I had introduced measures to repeal the death penalty, and some others had introduced measures to repeal the death penalty, as related to retardation. As you probably know, the Supreme Court has ruled that it is unconstitutional—killing people who are retarded. . . .

EIR: One other matter in the headlines, which you are providing leadership on, is dealing with nuclear waste. It's been passed in the Senate this week, that there should be Federal support for using the Yucca Mountain storage site in Nevada. You've spoken out about using sensible measures and having Federal responsibility.

Neal: What I have said, exactly, is that even though if you, living in the state of Nevada, are opposed to nuclear waste, the odds of keeping it out of the state were nil, because we did not have the political support in Congress to do that. So we might as well try to get some benefits for having it stored here. That's been essentially my position.

EIR: Looking at these things altogether then, when you came into office in 1972, this was a kind of turning point period for the nation, not just in your state.

A few years ago, you made a point of checking out what Lyndon LaRouche had to say—who is so bad-mouthed by the media. He has been warning, and meeting with people internationally, about the fact that we must take emergency measures and restore the economic practices that used to work 40 years ago, or in the 1930s. What is your thinking, now that you have put your hat in the ring, at such a critical time?

Neal: As you look back on it, and you see that the whole country has taken kind of a wrong turn, and virtually exposed the population to an activity that has looted their pockets. Because once you began to move into a deregulated environment, permitting private enterprise to operate regulation-free, when they were trying to make a profit—we are now finding out how devastating that can be.

I think that Lyndon LaRouche started speaking to those things, and has spoken to those things, and a lot of us who have watched and read what he has said, find that he has been on target, in terms of where this country is going. We can see the decay that is occurring everywhere. And that the loosening, or the repeal, of the FDR policies of the '30s has left us exposed to a lot of things in terms of private injuries, looting the pockets of the public.

The deregulated environment in electricity, in trucking, in telephones, in airlines, and all of that, has proven to be disastrous for the country. Costs have risen excessively in those deregulated environments, in the airlines, the trucking industry, the telephone communications industry—"restructuring" as they called it, which is deregulation of the electrical industry. And of course, nationally, and even locally, people have been put into positions of power, who seem to force these particular ideas, and the public has continued to suffer in those areas.

And of course, one of the main areas is medical care, where they suffered from this whole process of deregulation. And we've seen excessive costs, and people coming in and taking advantage of the sick, and insurance and other things, and HMOs, and when they make their bucks, they leave. Thereby, leaving the public to look to their government, while their government has virtually given up on them, in terms of controlling the situation in which the public has been harmed.

EIR: How long can this go on? LaRouche has put a time-frame on it, of a matter of months, say even November, for a real collapse. There is so much unpayable debt that has piled up. Right now, 46 of the 50 states, as of June 30, the end of their fiscal year, are in an impossible situation. They can't pay the debts.

Neal: That's true, and we happen to be one of the states that's in that particular situation right now. We have a deficit; it's continued to build. We have cut and cut and cut. We are kind

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of at a zero-based budgeting now, and that is bad. Going into the next session, if something is not done in terms of tax sources, we would be a bankrupt state.

I think the Democratic Party is going to have to go back and reassert themselves under the Roosevelt principles of the '30s. They left that. That has gotten them into real, real, real trouble. They allowed people like Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan to come in and sell the free enterprise idea to them, that business could do things better than government. And they actually just shamed many people out of their convictions on this. It's time to take another look at this particular process.

I would advise them to go back and read some of the articles written by Lyndon LaRouche on these things, because he seems to have been on target on a lot of stuff that has occurred, and seems to have a handle on these particular issues. I think the Democratic Party would do well to bring it within their midst, and try to reorganize themselves around some of those principles that he has espoused, which are essentially many of the principles coming out of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt era.

EIR: What is the situation of your campaign?

Neal: Somebody who supports the gambling interests said that I was 18% to Kenny Guinn's 67% in the polls. But we don't believe that. If that was true, then I'd think that ever since I filed, I'd have been steadily climbing in the polls. So we expect to have an upset in this race.

EIR: The Gaming Party is putting out the percentages?

Neal: What had happened with the gamblers here, is that they have organized their employees into little political blocs. They register their employees. Then they direct their employees (they don't say that, but) they direct them who to vote for! Of course, one of my proposals in the past, was to take them out of politics. New Jersey does not allow gamblers to get into politics. Out here, they are. So what you find, are places like Palace Station, which has about 11,000 employees—they register them, and then they send out material to them, as to who is favorable and unfavorable. Same thing happened with Park Palace, and MGM, and the like. It was originally started by Steve Winn. Many other houses have taken it up.

Gamblers don't think that they can be touched here. But we see, in our polling, that 67% are saying that the gamblers

should pay more for the growth and infrastructure needs of the state. And 61% said that they would vote for a person who would push those ideas. So, we are doing pretty good.

EIR: And the condition of the rest of the state? You are a mountainous, desert state. I think you are even the seventh largest in area in the country. So if you don't have infrastructure, you are in trouble.

Neal: Those are the things that I have spoken to, relative to the aspect of the placement of nuclear waste. That we should get some infrastructure projects, as it relates to that.

We are talking about rail, with spurs coming off the mainline, to move the waste. And we're talking about even getting a [magnetically] levitated train to run from one end of the state to the other. Also in the little valleys and areas in the middle part of the state, somebody might see something there that they might want to develop!

EIR: With interstate connections to California, Salt Lake and to the south, Nevada would be in the "middle" of the development.

Neal: Yes. As you already know, they've had a project on line for many years to try to run a levitated train from California to Vegas. That particular project was aimed at getting customers down here for gaming.

But what we need, is to spur the creativity of your people of the state, to get involved with their own ideas and things of that sort. That's where I am looking in this race. If we get elected, we hope we could put some of these things into action.

EIR: In water, the equivalent?

Neal: Yes. You know, we have some underground streams here. Back around 15 years ago, they were doing some research for the siting of the MX Missile project in this state, and they dug into some deep aquifers. They hit some pretty healthy groundwater, underground streams. And you do have that in the desert climate. This whole area at one time was an ocean. You have that type of activity that you could connect to, and help develop. The only thing that you have to worry about—that I have to worry about right now, and many of us are thinking about it—is to try to keep it out of private hands so it won't be too taxing to utilize.

EIR: We look forward to an upset in Nevada.