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## **Toquop Announcement Clears Way for Clean Energy** *Plant was last coal-fired project in Nevada*

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LAS VEGAS, Nevada – A decision by the Sithe Global Energy to abandon a proposal for a new coal-burning power plant near Mesquite, Nevada drew praise from a diverse group of voices who applauded the end to one of the last remaining obstacles in the state's transition to a full-fledged clean energy economy.

Sithe's parent company, the Blackstone Group, officially announced on a conference call this afternoon that it was dropping the proposed 750-megawatt Toquop Energy Project. Joining Blackstone's Tony James was Senator Harry Reid and Mesquite Mayor Susan Holecheck. The company said that it is instead pursuing a 700-MW natural gas plant with a 100-MW photovoltaic solar plant.

"With its vast wind, solar and geothermal resources and potential for meeting demand with energy efficiency programs, the decision to move away from coal really does bode well for Nevada," said Charles Benjamin, the state director of Western Resource Advocates. "It opens doors to an even swifter transition to 21<sup>st</sup> century energy technologies that will create jobs and revitalize Nevada's economy."

Early in 2009, there were still three proposals for new coal-burning power plants in Nevada, which would have generated 4,850 megawatts of electricity, enough to power roughly four million homes. NV Energy shelved its 2,500 MW Ely Energy Center in February and LS Power followed a month later when it abandoned plans for the 1,600-MW White Pine Energy Station. Both companies, whose plants would have been located near Ely, cited the financial risks, uncertainty of coal and the desire to move forward with projects focused more on renewable energy technologies. Toquop was the last of the three plants still moving forward.

“Nevada’s future lies with clean renewable energy, not outdated fossil fuel technologies,” said Steve Rypka, a renewable energy and green living consultant who owns GreenDream Enterprises in Henderson. “Clearing the last obstacle out of the way for that to happen is a big step forward for Nevada.”

Residents of Mesquite and southeastern Nevada, along with their counterparts just across the border in southwestern Utah, had fought the Toquop plant for years over concerns about pollution from its smokestacks and the effect on scarce local water resources. They said Sithe’s decision would help protect the region’s air quality and public health.

“We can all breathe a little easier now,” said Michele Burkett of the group Defend Our Desert. “Now we hope that this can pave the way for Nevada to become our nation’s leader in developing home-grown clean, renewable energy. That will enable us to become an energy exporter while growing our own economy with good long-term jobs.”

Former Public Utilities Commissioner and Nevada Consumer Advocate Tim Hay said the decision by Sithe and Blackstone are in line with trends by utilities and power companies nationwide. In the last several years, more than 125 proposals for coal-burning plants have been halted as developers or regulators determine that there are affordable and reliable options to coal that don’t have its financial risks or require the expenditure of billions of dollars.

“More and more power providers and investors are realizing the high risks associated with coal, while at the same time looking for ways that new and existing demand can be met with a combination of cleaner energy sources and also a full menu of energy efficiency measures,” said Hay. “Ultimately, that’s good for both shareholders and rate-paying customers.”

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