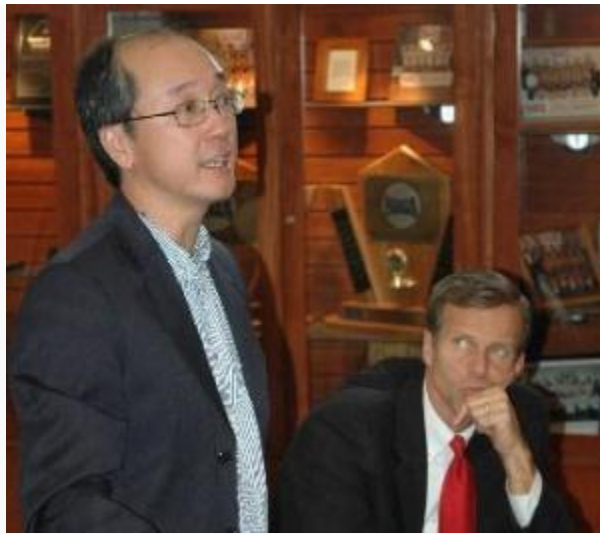


09-14-07

National Science Foundation Official Predicts Homestake Prominence

By Kevin Woster, Journal staff

With the impending development of a deep underground science and engineering laboratory in the abandoned Homestake gold mine, South Dakota is on the edge of international prominence for scientific research, the assistant director of the National Science Foundation said Thursday.



Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., listens Thursday at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology as National Science Foundation assistant director Tony Chan discusses the worldwide scientific value of the deep underground science laboratory being developed at the abandoned Homestake gold mine in Lead. (Kevin Woster, Journal staff)

"I can guarantee you that South Dakota, Rapid City and Lead ... are already on the radar screen of the worldwide community of science," Tony Chan said during a roundtable discussion organized by Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

Chan and Thune were joined at the roundtable by other NSF officials, U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, D-S.D., a staffer for U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., School of Mines geology professor Bill Roggenthen -- who serves as co-principal investigator of the science laboratory project -- and Dave Snyder, executive director of the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority. The audience of about 60 people included School of Mines president Charles Ruch, state Board of Regents executive director Tad Perry, Rapid City Mayor Alan Hanks and South Dakota House

Republican leader Larry Rhoden.

In opening the discussion, Thune said the selection of Homestake as the site of the underground science and engineering laboratory meant that the old mine -- which was founded in 1876 -- would still be home to important digging, but now for knowledge instead of gold.

"We hope this will be a whole new chapter as we moved into what we hope will be another 130 years of discovery," Thune said.

After the roundtable at the school, Thune held a similar gathering for Lead city leaders at the offices of the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority in Lead. It also gave Chan an opportunity to see the Homestake location and facilities for the first time.

Before that Lead visit, Herseth Sandlin said it was important for Chan to see the town and facility in person and have a firsthand idea of the potential.

The turnout Thursday and the enthusiasm and support from the public and private sectors also should help show that the NFS made the right choice in selecting Homestake as the home of the underground lab, Herseth Sandlin said.

"We know the underground science lab will be a national asset," she said. "Here in South Dakota, we take good care of assets, whether they are natural monuments or Air Force bases."

In a presentation that summarized the history of the Homestake lab efforts and looked at the future, Roggenthen affirmed the nationwide scope of the science laboratory.

"Homestake is a national project that is located in South Dakota. And I think that is an important distinction," Roggenthen said.

The list of scientific collaborators interested in being involved in the laboratory has grown to more than 300, Roggenthen said. Those kinds of resources added to the existing public and private support in South Dakota increase the chances of success, he said.

"We have a long ways ahead of us. We have a lot of work to do. But I think the Homestake collaboration is up to it," he said.

Chan said the research in fundamental scientific issues at Homestake will produce practical applications that will benefit the government and private sector. And the laboratory and its educational offerings will help produce high-quality scientists in the future, he said.

"It's important to inspire the young people who will come into our area and make sure the pipeline will be filled with the best talent," he said.

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