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Sisolak shares vision for 'Innovation Zones,' opponents worry they'll deplete resources in rural Nevada

By: [KTNV Staff](#) , Associated Press

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LAS VEGAS (KTNV) — Gov. Steve Sisolak says "Innovation Zones" could boost commerce in Nevada and diversify its economy, an idea discussed during a roundtable hosted by the governor on Friday.

An Innovation Zone would be a self-governing community, much like individual cities or counties, but run by businesses.

Under the proposal, companies that promise to invest \$1.25 billion could form Innovation Zones on their land where they would oversee governmental functions like zoning and law enforcement.

The proposal is geared toward Blockchains LLC, a cryptocurrency company that wants to build a smart city in rural Nevada.

Blockchain is a digital ledger known mostly for recording cryptocurrency transactions. It's the technology that makes [Bitcoin possible](#).

Gov. Sisolak backs the idea.

He says it will help diversify Nevada's economy, which is needed now more than ever as the pandemic devastates the tourism industry.

"I just ask that all involved understand that the end goal is a massive economic development investment in Nevada," said Sisolak.

"And [it's] a chance to set down a marker that Nevada is a blockchain technology of the world," he added.

But, not everyone supports the idea.

Patrick Donnelly, the Nevada state director for the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity said these dessert communities would need water, which could "drain remote aquifers important to indigenous people, endangered species and Nevada's outdoor recreation economy."

Read Donnelly's full statement below.

"The most important question to ask about a new city in Nevada is: where's the water going to come from? And with Blockchains we know their plans – it's a massive water grab from rural Nevada. Blockchains LLC's plan is to build a 100 mile pipeline to the Black Rock Desert to drain remote aquifers important to indigenous people, endangered species and Nevada's outdoor recreation economy. Blockchains is setting the stage for a good old fashioned Nevada water war, and the Center and our allies are ready for the fight. Governor Sisolak wants to give the keys to our state to tech bros, while enabling a water grab which would destroy the environment. We oppose this outrageous corporate giveaway and we oppose the Innovation Zones legislation."

KTNV 13 Action News and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

