utility industry welcomed the amendments act as offering assurances that the construction of a waste repository would proceed at an acceptable pace. Nevadans were irate, however, that the site selection process had been short-circuited, and Nevada Governor Richard Bryan, terming the act a "legislative atrocity," promised the state would use every legal remedy to oppose the decision. A further complicating factor was that if the Yucca Mountain site proved unacceptable for environmental or other reasons there would be no available alternative site.[124]

SUPERCONDUCTIVITY

Major scientific discoveries in superconductivity reinforced Herrington's views that America's energy strength should also be pursued through government funding of basic research, which, in this case, offered promise of dramatic new efficiencies in electric technology. Superconductors, at very low temperatures, lose their resistance to the flow of electricity. Breakthroughs in 1986 and 1987 reduced the amount of cooling and, therefore, the cost of achieving superconductivity. White House Science Advisor William R. Graham stated, "not since the invention of the transistor, or perhaps even the electric light bulb, has there been an event in science so fundamentally important and with such enormous potential."[125] The enormous commercial potential for computers, long-distance electrical transmission lines, appliances, transportation, and other uses of electricity was evident. At a federal conference on the commercial applications of superconductivity co-hosted by the Department and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, President Reagan marveled how basic scientific research with apparently little practical purpose could suddenly alter our lives. For Herrington, the conference was gratifying evidence of how the Reagan energy policy worked at its best, bringing together in partnership United States business, government, universities, and laboratories for discussions and exchange of information and ideas. Indeed, the President's Superconductivity Initiative faithfully reflected the administration's policy "for the swift transfer of technology and technical information from the government to the private sector."[126]

THE SUPERCONDUCTING SUPER COLLIDER (SSC)

The superconducting super collider demonstrated another dimension of the Reagan Administration's support of basic science.

Secretary of Energy John S. Herrington (1985-1989), Secretary of State George Schultz, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger applaud President Reagan at the Federal Conference on Commercial Applications of Superconductivity, July 28, 1987.
Source: U.S. Department of Defense