



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

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### **Governor Bill Richardson urges DOE to release \$42 million For waste cleanup at LANL**

SANTA FE - New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson today issued the following statement about the U.S. Department of Energy's decision to withhold \$42 million for the cleanup at Los Alamos National Laboratory:

Despite the state's best efforts to reach agreement with the lab over environmental cleanup, DOE chose not to cooperate. This troubles me deeply because it will prevent important cleanup work from beginning -- work that is needed to make sure the health and environment of people in Northern New Mexico are protected.

Over a year ago the state of New Mexico issued a corrective action order to ensure that a comprehensive, fence-to-fence cleanup was undertaken at the lab. Rather than begin this important cleanup work, the DOE has fought the state with lawyers and lawsuits. This has cost the lab millions of dollars that should have been spent cleaning up waste.

Throughout the last year the New Mexico Environment Department and Secretary Ron Curry tried to negotiate with the lab over this order. Officials from the department have even traveled to Washington to meet with top DOE officials.

Despite repeated assurances from DOE Assistant Secretary Jessie Roberson that the DOE could work with the state's cleanup order, it is now obvious that the department will not follow through with its promises. The state has therefore been given no other choice but to look for other, perhaps less cooperative, ways to make sure this important environmental work is completed.

We have the option to re-issue a new order to Los Alamos in January, or we can issue more specific corrective action orders directed at specific areas within the lab property. We can also issue notices of violations.

DOE has revealed a marked lack of environmental leadership, both at DOE headquarters in Washington and here at the lab in Los Alamos.

Most troubling to me, this DOE tactic is beginning to look very much like extortion when the Department of Energy claims that unless New Mexico bends to its will, DOE will withhold 42-million dollars in needed cleanup funding. This is money already allocated by Congress to DOE for LANL cleanup. This money could be released by DOE and sent to New Mexico at any time.

I want this money released and used for cleanup at the lab. I am working with our congressional delegation to make sure this gets done.

I also want LANL and DOE to agree to the state mandated lab cleanup. The state deserves a prescriptive and enforceable order.

DOE's own plan is not acceptable to safeguard New Mexicans. It won't adequately protect drinking water supplies from laboratory contamination, nor will it clean up old waste dumps.

The state has been a good host to the DOE for more than half a century. We have successfully negotiated a satisfactory cleanup order with DOE for Sandia National Laboratory.

The state has also found success working with DOE over the WIPP project. The state continues to work with DOE on this plant, reviewing permit modifications that ask us to adjust our regulatory authority and allow other sorts of waste to go to WIPP. Some requests we reject immediately, like DOE's plan to send reclassified high-level waste to WIPP. Others we look at more closely, like DOE's request to bury remote handled waste at WIPP. As a result of DOE's intransigence, we need to look at this proposal in a new light.

I am asking today for DOE to cooperate with the state on LANL clean up. Otherwise, how can they expect us to remain cooperative in the future?