



State of New Mexico

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For immediate release
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New Mexico, DOE reach agreement on lab clean-up

Pact Will Ensure Fence-to-Fence Lab Clean Up,
Allow LANL to Collect \$43 Million in DOE Funds

ALBUQUERQUE - U.S. Senator Pete Domenici and Governor Bill Richardson jointly praised a hard-fought agreement reached today between the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) on an enforceable, fence-to-fence environmental cleanup order for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

The agreement will ensure that the environmental problems created during LANL's 60 years of operations are cleaned up in a timely manner enforceable by the State of New Mexico. It was also allow New Mexico to collect \$43 million, which is the LANL portion of DOE funding specifically prescribed by Congress for environmental cleanup work at DOE sites. The funding could not be allocated without an agreement between the state and DOE.

Following months of stalemate that threatened to derail specific cleanup work at LANL, the agreement reached came after Domenici and Richardson worked together with NMED and DOE to kick-start negotiations. Domenici is chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, which has funding jurisdiction over DOE and its national laboratories.

“I am very pleased that the Los Alamos cleanup issue has been resolved, and that a goal-oriented plan has been finalized. The state and DOE have now agreed to a plan that should bring about real results, which is specifically what Congress wants in place before releasing the funding,” Domenici said. “The agreement will enable us to accomplish the cleanup in a shorter timeframe, almost 20 years earlier than originally projected.”

“This clean up order will protect New Mexicans for generations to come,” Richardson said. “It is a tough plan that will ensure our resources, including our precious, limited water, will be cleaned up and protected. I am happy to see that the hardnosed negotiators at our state Environment Department have hammered out a good deal to see that the cleanup issues of the site will be addressed.”

Governor Richardson recognized U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, who played a key role in helping to resolve this issue. “I want to recognize his public support and his behind-the-scenes work that helped get these talks on track. His constant efforts for the health and safety of New Mexicans were once again evident in the role he played here,” Governor Richardson said.

“As chairman of the subcommittee that provided the funds for accelerated cleanup, I will work to ensure a timely release of the cleanup funds for Los Alamos so we can get to the task at hand,” Domenici added. “I’m grateful to Governor Richardson and his administration for their cooperation to get this agreement. It is the result of good, solid negotiating and it will be good for New Mexico.”

Domenici has kept in close contact with Richardson on this issue of cleanup, and provided a copy of the legislation regarding the use of additional federal funding for accelerated lab cleanup work. Domenici and his staff also intervened with DOE representatives to foster better relations between the two negotiating teams as the agreement was crafted.

In November 2002, the state attempted to compel action by DOE and sought a Correction Action Order seeking comprehensive LANL cleanup. Richardson repeatedly hammered home the importance of this issue to LANL/DOE leadership in Washington and in New Mexico, including talks with lab director Pete Nanos.

Within the FY2003 and FY2004 Energy and Water Appropriations bills, Domenici provided additional and new funding for accelerated cleanup at DOE labs and affected sites only if an agreement for this work had been reached between each state and DOE. Los Alamos was the only site in the lower 48 states without a signed agreement, leaving \$43 million in new cleanup funding in limbo.