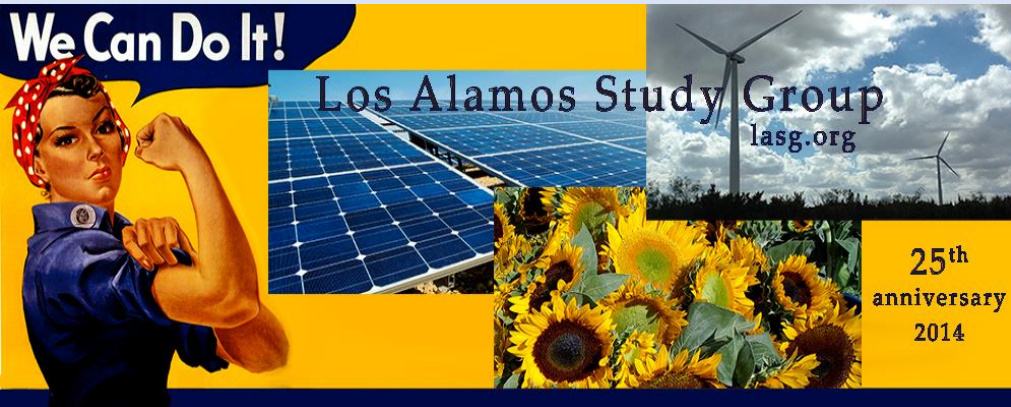


**Briefing materials for Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham,  
Senior Policy Advisor Stephanie Rodriguez, and colleagues**

Greg Mello and colleagues, Los Alamos Study Group, 22 Aug 2019, edited slightly 26 Aug

**(A) Transparency and (B) environmental impact statements  
(national and local) are needed to help the Department of  
Energy (DOE) and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL)  
navigate the “Great Transition,” especially as regards  
plutonium pit production.**



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## A. Our principle requests are outlined in our August 1, 2019 [letter](#) (attached).

1. For a meeting with you or your staff (thank you so far!), preferably with senators or their staff present, regarding plutonium warhead core (“pit”) production at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and related community and social development and environmental issues.
2. Four federal pit production analyses your administration should have, as should the public, and which we believe you or our senators could cause to be released:
  - a. A redacted version of the unclassified, controlled “Independent Assessment of the Plutonium Strategy of the National Nuclear Security Administration [NNSA],” Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), Mar 2019, for the Department of Defense (DoD);
  - b. The entire “Independent Assessment of the Two-Site Pit Production Decision,” IDA, May 2019, for NNSA, stamped “Official Use Only” (OUO), which is a purely political marking in this case.
  - c. “...a detailed plan to produce 30 pits per year at Los Alamos National Laboratory by 2026,” required by an amendment co-sponsored by Rep. Grisham, now a statute, and its companion,
  - d. “...a detailed plan for designing and carrying out production of plutonium pits 31–80 at [LANL], in case the [repurposed] MOX [Mixed Oxide] facility [in South Carolina] is not operational and producing pits by 2030.”
3. Your request for a national (“programmatic”) environmental impact statement (EIS) for pit production as well as for
4. A Site-Wide EIS (SWEIS) for LANL, which would include pit production as well as other connected actions and cumulative impacts.

We have three more requests at this time.

1. We would like Governor Grisham to denounce any and all plans for a consolidated interim storage site for spent nuclear fuel as fundamentally flawed and as a plan she will oppose with all the resources available to the State of New Mexico.
2. We would like Governor Grisham to privately admonish our senators for their attempt to suborn the Environment Department and the Office of the Governor for political purposes, namely to blackmail the DOE into giving LANL the entire plutonium pit production mission by threatening to withhold all or part of the hazardous waste permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). We see no reason this needs to be done publicly, even though the threat and misuse of your Office was very public.
3. Issues related to LANL, not to mention economic and social development, are complex. We believe our perspectives are learned and important for the success of your administration. It might be a good idea to meet from time to time or to find other ways to improve communications.
4. [This one was brought up orally in our meeting: we want the products of the current LANL site planning process.]

## **B. LANL is a terrible place for plutonium pit production – or for any high-hazard industrial mission.**

- a. Please see attached materials.
- b. The incompatibility of these missions with LANL's location, geology, topography, identity, and culture will result in a) mission failure and b) very real negative consequences for the region. The confidence projected by the latest LANL managers is no indication of success. The vast sums proposed in an attempt to overcome LANL's basic problems are also a symptom of other costs which the region and state will ultimately pay.
- c. Industrial pit production is not just another LANL mission and regional revenue source. It is very different in character, scale, projected permanence, and transuranic (TRU) waste production than anything done at LANL before.
- d. Once begun, growth in industrial pit production may be very hard to stop except by the inevitable failures and accidents, hopefully without loss of life. The proposed "30" pit per year (ppy) production rate is really ~41 ppy and even so is not enough to support the proposed stockpile uses. Much more will be required, somewhere, if current stockpile plans are retained. What will stop growth, or stop the mission altogether, is local or national program failure. Both are sooner or later certain. The damages and opportunity costs in New Mexico will meanwhile accumulate. Doors will close for us.
- e. Pit production would, we believe, cement New Mexico's position at the bottom of every national list.
- f. Pit production is also a grave political danger to the Governor, her legacy, and therefore, her Party.

## C. At least two other nuclear decisions pose dangers for the State

- a. WIPP was built for the disposal of defense TRU waste. That waste needs to be permanently and deeply buried. WIPP is the very best place for it. The Governor should resist efforts to prevent WIPP from being used as efficiently as possible for its original purpose, including disposal of surplus plutonium if DOE so decides.
- b. We ourselves believe disposal of “sterilized” (demilitarized) pits is likely to be possible and appropriate. Studies of this option should be conducted immediately. We expect they will find that such disposal would be very cost-effective, fast, and much more environmentally-friendly than processing and dilution, and would use remaining WIPP volume more effectively.
- c. The Holtec facility is poorly conceived in concept and in its details. It is far more impactful than is being presented. There will need to be processing of broken fuel rods and resulting secondary nuclear waste. Fuel will need repackaging so a spent fuel pool operation will be needed. It is unlikely that very much of the spent fuel brought to New Mexico will ever leave.
- d. There are much better spent fuel options available.
- e. We would like the Governor to vigorously denounce the Holtec proposal on every occasion. Doing so will save a lot of time and money down the road.
- f. Preventing disposal of surplus plutonium, and failing to stop the progress of consolidated interim storage of spent nuclear fuel in the state, are both grave risks to the Governor’s legacy.
- g. The black mark on New Mexico’s identity and reputation, and on the consciousness of our young people, from consolidated interim storage of spent nuclear fuel would be indelible and profound. As would industrial pit production.

## **D. LANL has not truly helped New Mexico and never will**

- a. Please see attached materials; many more could be cited or brought.
- b. One main problem is that our definitions and framings of “economic development” exclude the very people who are supposed to, and most need to, benefit. In fact there is an institutional and class imperative at LANL for “prestige,” which is needed for recruitment and retention, i.e. to be atop a social hierarchy which puts many local people at the bottom.
- c. The primary problem with economic development analysis in a neocolonial setting, which is where we find ourselves, is that neither “the social problem,” nor “the political problem,” are considered at all.
- d. “Nuclear enchantment” describes a belief system, necessary for LANL’s budget, under which New Mexico cannot thrive.
- e. Let us listen again to Herman Agoyo’s words from 1993:

The promise of jobs and development [from LANL] has not truly benefited us. Yes, people weren't as hungry as before, some were able to buy cars and trucks, but for the most part, the poor people, Indians, and Spanish were and still are at the bottom of the work ladder where advanced science and the highest technology positions are rewarded for the very few. The vision of "education" has also been an elusive entitlement. Approximately 30 percent of our young people do not finish high school and the majority who do graduate end up with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level education, and consequently they are derailed in so many preventable and cruel ways from the best technical and leadership opportunities. Worse, our children are never systematically taught the most important and complex truths about the world they live in, truths that are needed to instill a sense of clear purpose and decision-making confidence in our human society.

The “opportunities” have also turned to ashes. We have slowly realized that this work which started out to harness an unimaginable power has in fact harmed human beings and the planet beyond any calculation. It has harmed us all by the sickness, death, and destruction that has been the ultimate product of this work. It has harmed us by the nightmare fear instilled in the hearts and minds of all the world's peoples...

## **E. Due to the radical dominance of neoliberal development ideas, the State still lacks an alternative social, economic, and ecological development vision in harmony with current realities and opportunities.**