

# Will energy monopolies & the nuclear cartel control NM’s future?

## All social progress, including climate mitigation, requires halting the nuclear arms buildup & fostering energy democracy.

It is common to speak of an “energy transition” as if it involved voluntary, narrow choices. It does not. A “Capital-T” Transition is already underway, involving far more than how energy is produced and used. Our economic and social lives are changing in ways that involve declining prosperity (as conventionally measured) and greater precarity. And, unless we vigorously exercise it, even less democracy.

For ecological, resource-quality, and geopolitical reasons, real economic growth is over. Economic and environmental decline are “baked in” and underway. Meanwhile, maintaining a livable climate requires full-on emergency efforts. The crisis is comprehensive, total. How “we” – governments at all levels, businesses, churches, organizations, and families – use and shape the “Long Emergency” ahead is up to us.

Our political, media, and nonprofit leaders seldom seem to understand or acknowledge the full depth and breadth of the crisis. We sympathize up to a point, but candor is required.

Attempts to achieve inflation-corrected, real economic growth at the expense of climate protection, social justice, and democratic participation are not just immoral but will fail, from here on out.

It ought to be obvious: to protect the climate, there is no alternative to rapidly curtailing fossil fuel production. New Mexico currently leads the nation in oil production growth, and politicians love it. That is the dead opposite of climate leadership.

### Will NM’s future be waylaid by a democracy deficit?

Will the State use our converging energy, economic, & climate crises to foster resilience, genuine democracy, and a social contract that protects the poor?

Not under current plans. This administration’s well-intentioned “energy transition” is composed of far too much business-as-usual (BAU) fossil fuel extraction, technologies that won’t deliver the needed benefits – either at all (“blue hydrogen”) or enough (electric cars, large-scale battery storage, “green hydrogen,” more).

What will be delivered is ever-rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Meaningless promises of distant-future “net zero” emissions are made, along with ardent courtship of even-less-accountable energy monopolies and colonial-style renewable energy harvesting, for the purpose of greenwashing brown economic growth in other states. Few or no net new jobs will be created. It’s very much BAU with green paint.



### We can’t have political democracy or real prosperity without energy democracy

There is little question that a climate “shock doctrine” narrative is being used to sell for-profit energy harvesting by government-enabled monopolies to large segments of the progressive and environmental community.

Successful climate and energy policies will begin by thinking in terms of people and livelihoods, not profits or kilowatt-hours. The question is not how to deliver electricity cheaply and reliably but prior to that, what are the social and governance implications? How many livelihoods will be created, of what kinds? Who will own the installation and distribution system? What educational, moral, and institutional effects will result? How will livelihoods and the vulnerable be protected, and children educated?

To succeed, we must address our social and the environmental crises together. As our crises have converged, so must our responses. The synergies available in the energy transition provide an opportunity – if we fail, the lost opportunity – to do that.

### 100% renewable energy is not possible at anything like present consumption levels

There are no technological “solutions” even remotely capable of supplying U.S. society as we know it with 100% renewable or nuclear energy – not now and not decades hence, for fundamental scientific and engineering reasons too extensive to list here. The myth that renewable energy will or can displace all the fossil fuels we now use is just that, a fantasy. It’s dangerous, as it supposes manufacturing and construction on a massive scale, with huge climate and other environmental and social impacts and opportunity costs around the world. Pursued fully, this fantasy would destroy the climate by trying to save it. Technically, it would fail, and in the process consume the precious opportunities we now have to realistically address the climate crisis. Those opportunities involve using much less energy to produce much more satisfaction.

There are also too few key resources on this planet to successfully pursue dreams of, say, universal electrification. There aren’t enough high-quality ores of critical materials needed, and it would use far too much brown energy to build.

To live, let alone prosper, we will need to leave our consumer identity and embrace life-fostering vocations as best we can. We need many more livelihoods that serve, educate, protect, heal, and renew. To pay for them we need steeply progressive, higher taxes. Quality of life costs money and NM has been willing to pay it. Life expectancies currently vary by two or more decades between census blocks in our state. NM will never thrive without addressing our grotesque inequality and poverty, which is not being done. Oil and gas revenues hurt the development of a true soci contract. They’re an addiction we cannot afford.

Sooner rather than later if we are wise, we will re-learn how to build, produce, and share, not just how to earn and spend selfishly. We will need to talk to each other at all levels of government, across present political divides. We will learn to practice “simple living and high thinking.”

Climate and energy issues, which will increasingly influence our economics and politics, are class issues. We will not succeed if we do not incorporate what the Catholic Church calls “the preferential option for the poor.” Most families are now economically vulnerable and it will only get worse. We have to begin with the vulnerable, not include them as an afterthought as we so often see. The purposes of public policy, including for energy and climate, revolve around people, not profits.

### Climate mitigation requires ending the New Cold War. Santa Fe, look to St. Francis.

There will be no climate mitigation without cooperation between China (the largest contributor to greenhouse gases, GHG), the U.S. (by far the most influential country, the largest economy, first in oil and gas production, second in GHG emissions), and Russia (second largest oil and gas producer, critical fuel supplier to the rest of Europe and China).

But how can cooperation occur in the midst of a new Cold War, with China and Russia our “enemies”? It can’t. By definition.

There will be no effective climate response – and for that matter, no social justice, no fiscal responsibility, and no democratic relief from the “double government” which has largely replaced constitutional government in national security affairs – without ending U.S. imperial ambitions, the militarism that supports them, and the nuclear arms race enabling it all.

The U.S. military costs more than the militaries of all the other countries in the world combined, save three. Our local Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is in dollar terms the biggest center for the design and production for weapons of mass destruction anywhere in the world. As discussed in a 9/22/21 ad in this newspaper and extensively at lasg.org, a huge expansion of LANL’s nuclear weapons mission is now underway, primarily focused on building a factory for producing plutonium warhead cores (“pits”). This was the mission of the ill-fated Rocky Flats Plant, shuttered for

grave environmental and safety violations.

### To foster climate cooperation, stop pit production. It may be easier than you think.

While the U.S. could maintain its nuclear arsenal indefinitely without LANL’s new pits, the nuclear arms race would be almost impossible without them. New LANL pits are needed for a new warhead (“W87-1”) and a missile system (“Ground Based Strategic Deterrent”), to begin deployment in 2030. Only LANL can produce pits in the 2020s and early 2030s for these unnecessary monstrosities.

✂ \_\_\_\_\_  
Clip & mail to the address at the bottom.

☐ I will be there on November 5th. ☐ I will recruit my friends and contacts to come. ☐ I can come early and help set up.

☐ I endorse the “Call for Sanity, Not Nuclear Production” (<https://lasg.org/wordpress/we-call-for-sanity-no-nuclear-production/>)

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LANL has failed every time it has attempted to expand its pit mission – four times over the past 32 years. In this latest attempt, the cost of starting up LANL’s pit factory has increased more than fourfold over the past four years to more than \$12 billion. In the business world this program would have failed already. Instead it enjoys a kind of “nuclear weapons socialism” that never applies to small business, or the working poor. Our political priorities and values are inverted, to our own great cost.

### A solar system for every family in NM and tens of thousands of new jobs, or a new Rocky Flats Plants near Santa Fe?

LANL’s “night of the living dead” pit program is a twisted, three-decade tale of misguided ambition, multiple failures, fiscal waste, and lately, unprecedented secrecy. Across the entire tableau of gold-plated U.S. nuclear weapons programs, LANL’s pit program really takes the cake as “the worst of the worst”.

How wrong is it? Starting up LANL’s worse-than-useless pit program is expected to cost roughly twice the total retail cost of all the components needed for a 4 kilowatt solar system for every household in NM, enough energy for a frugal family. As incentive or subsidy it would go farther and encompass other energy upgrades also. The rest of the \$12+ billion would fully support 12,000 solar jobs for a decade, or train several tens of thousands of people. Each pit produced would cost \$50 million.

Think about it. No society which incorporates the level of waste and folly embodied in LANL’s pit program can expect to survive.

### Environmental impacts? More than we know.

The environmental impacts of the pit mission would be great even in the best case, which seldom applies: another WIPP site may be needed for the waste this program will produce; more nuclear facilities are planned, to expand plutonium missions and replace decrepit facilities; new roads through the Caja del Rio and a new bridge across the Rio Grande have been discussed; a new power line is planned.

LANL seeks construction camps at the Pueblos, and a permanent fleet of dedicated commuter buses to carry 2,000 – 3,000 people to and from the lab daily. Some 255,000 sq. ft. of new office, training, and biological lab space is already leased or advertised, mostly in Santa Fe so far as pit production takes over more of LANL proper.

### Now is the time to take appropriate action.

When (not if) serious accidents occur, it will be too late for second thoughts. Sunk costs are likely to weigh heavily on official minds. Now is the time to take appropriate action, which we will discuss together on Nov. 5 at the Capitol.