**PRESS RELEASE**

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 **Public Interest Group Sues DOE for Descriptions**

 **Of Los Alamos Nuclear Weapons Projects**

 **Santa Fe**--Today in Federal District Court the Los Alamos Study Group, represented by attorney Steve Sugarman, filed a lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) seeking unclassified, public information regarding the nuclear weapons program at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Both LANL and DOE have failed to respond to the Study Group's formal FOIA requests for over a year in some cases. The statutory response time is ten days. LANL is run by the University of California under a recently-renewed non-competitive contract with the Department of Energy (DOE).

 Today's lawsuit seeks help from the court on six distinct information requests, four of which bear on nuclear weapons-related matters:

• The purpose, general description, and status of nuclear weapons projects at Los Alamos;

• Documents regarding LANL's program to develop a replacement warhead for the Navy's submarine-launched missiles;

• Budget codes and general descriptions of current nuclear weapons projects;

• Background documents relating to LANL's plans to upgrade its defunct Nuclear Materials Storage Facility in order to bring several additional tons of plutonium to Los Alamos for permanent storage, processing, and manufacture into new weapons parts;

• Travel records regarding the thousands of trips LANL employees took to the Washington, DC area and to foreign countries in 1996; and

• Budgets and personnel involved in DOE and LANL public relations and "corporate citizenship" activities in New Mexico.

All these requests concern unclassified information.

 The lawsuit further requests that, pursuant to FOIA, an investigation of whether disciplinary action may be warranted against employees for unlawfully withholding information in these and other requests.

 Earlier this year, the Study Group won a FOIA lawsuit against DOE over videotapes of presentations at a LANL "Global Nuclear Vision Project" conference, including those of a talk by a senior LANL manager regarding "cooperative" nuclear weapons stewardship with Russia and China.

 "We have been driven to the court by the near-complete lack of openness and cooperation among all but a handful of people at LANL. Sandia's corporate culture is, by contrast, significantly more straightforward and honest," said Study Group Director Greg Mello. "Time after time, our LANL requests are left to languish indefinitely. Doesn't the public have some right to know what official reports say about design problems at a proposed major new plutonium storage facility? Or what nuclear weapon designers are actually doing?"

 The Study Group has been instrumental in uncovering the deployment of a new earth-penetrating nuclear bomb, as well as plans to develop and certify a new warhead for the Navy using experiments to be conducted at LANL's above-ground testing facilities.  **\*\*\*ENDS**