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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT DIVISION

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August 19, 1988

The Honorable John Glenn, Chairman
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

**RE: Environment, Safety and Health
Report for the Department of Energy
Denfense Complex (July 1, 1988)**

Dear Senator Glenn:

The State of New Mexico was graciously provided a copy of the subject report to your committee by the Department of Energy. The State has an active interest in the environmental impact of DOE activities as we have two major facilities and two minor sites located within our borders. We wish to provide to you our perspective on the DOE report and solicit your support.

The report indicates large dollar costs for environmental remediation at both Los Alamos National Laboratory (Report Appendix F) and Sandia National Laboratory, Albuquerque (Report Appendix O) but provides no detail as to which projects are contemplated. We noted however that LANL projected 15 to 20 remedial actions and SNLA projected 5 to 13. We believe these numbers may be low by as much as a factor of ten or more. The hazardous waste permitting process has so far identified 775 potential clean up sites at LANL and 150 at SNLA. We believe that it would be prudent for DOE to estimate a larger number of these sites will require remedial action.



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We noted that the Residual Nuclear Explosive Sites monitored by DOE's Nevada Operations Office (Report Appendix M) are subject to review for release of radionuclides to groundwater above allowable limits. The State would prefer that DOE apply a statistical monitoring criterion that responded to a trend of increasing release levels, rather than waiting until a threat was manifest. This same "early warning" approach is used by the State in their hazardous waste site permitting program.

In conclusion, the State of New Mexico would support any legislation or effort by your committee to provide adequate funds for DOE to address these environmental issues. We emphasize that the cost of remediation is great but that the potential threat to our groundwater and air is greater.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard Mitzelfelt
Acting Director

RM/CKC/pv

cc: Governor Garrey Carruthers
Senator Pete Dominici
Senator Jeff Bingaman
Representative Bill Richardson
Representative Manuel Lujan
Representative Joe Skeen
F. Berndt Schine, DOE Director of Intergovernmental Affairs