



# Los Alamos Study Group

*Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability*

**Board of**

**Directors:** June 13, 2003

Rebecca Abelson,  
Santa Fe, NM

The Honorable Ron Curry, Secretary  
New Mexico Environment Department  
Harold Runnels Building

David Bacon,  
Santa Fe, NM

1190 St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87502 – 6110

Samuel Hitt,  
Santa Fe, NM

Gregory Mello,  
Albuquerque, NM

**Re: Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Technical Area (TA) - 55, disposal areas G, H, and L: delivery of petitions to Governor's office on Thursday, June 26, at 10:00 am**

Zia Mian,  
Princeton, NJ

Christopher Paine,  
Charlottesville, VA

Dear Ron –

William Weida,  
McCall, ID

Thank you for meeting with several of us on May 19 regarding the TA-54 hazardous waste landfills, and particularly regarding Area G, which remains "open for business" despite its lack of any disposal permit, or indeed any basis upon which a permit could be issued.

As we discussed that day, we have been collecting petitions from members of the public requesting that Governor Richardson, through the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), halt disposal operations at Area G, and hold hearings on the disposition of the waste already in TA-54 as well as in other disposal sites at LANL. We will be presenting these to the Governor's office soon, and hope you or your representative will be there to answer questions about prospects for closure and related topics.

The date for the press conference and delivery of petitions has been set at Thursday, June 26, at 10:00 am at the State Capitol.

The petitions will be in the (now surely familiar) form of food cans, with labels that provide information about continued waste disposal and related topics. We will provide more information at the press conference, and there will be guest speakers to keep it interesting. We hope many people and many organizations will be able to come. We would be happy if you made a few remarks from the podium.

For your convenience, we will provide you with an electronic spreadsheet of the current petitioners to add to those you already have.

I would like to emphasize that these petitions are being made pursuant to specific provisions in both state and federal hazardous waste law, and ask for no more than has been formally requested by the New Mexico Attorney General's office. While the issue is relatively new to your administration, it has been pending before the NMED since 1985.

It may appear that our proposal for complete closure is impossible to grant. It is not – indeed, we believe that neither law nor logic can suggest any other course. Yet short of compliance may lie some positive steps your department could take to show its good faith in this matter. We have suggested several: characterization and public disclosure requirements for waste being disposed, which is now handled on "the honor system" even within the laboratory itself; fines for continued disposal at an unpermitted hazardous waste site; independent performance assessment for the site, which would quickly reveal that risk is bounded only to the extent that long-term future activities at the site can be controlled – which is to say, not at all. It is neither a safe site nor is a safe disposal technique used.

We hope you can bring us some positive news on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Whether this turns out to be the case or not, thank you for your attention and we look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Greg Mello, Executive Director



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