



News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOMENICI & SKEEN HOPE TO KEEP WIPP OPTION OPEN FOR PROPOSED NSF UNDERGROUND EXPERIMENTS

Advisory Committee Recommends Deeper Homestead Mine

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici and Representative Joe Skeen today asserted that they will continue to push for the National Science Foundation to conduct some scientific experiments at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, despite a recommendation the agency place its primary underground laboratory facility in an old South Dakota mine.

Domenici and Skeen, with local Carlsbad officials, in February hosted an advisory committee that evaluated potential sites for a NSF deep underground scientific and experimental laboratory. The group this week recommended the defunct Homestake Mine in South Dakota, over WIPP or Mt. San Jacinto, Calif., as the primary location for the NSF facility.

The WIPP was site reportedly passed on by the National Underground Physics Laboratory Technical Advisory Subcommittee based on the need for a class of experiments requiring depths greater than those accessible at WIPP.

Domenici said he will encourage NSF Director Rita Colwell to use WIPP for NSF scientific research and experiments.

“Last month’s evaluation, and its high visibility within the scientific community, has helped New Mexicans and the nation better understand the capabilities of WIPP. I’m confident our efforts to support this NSF review have increased the chances that WIPP will be the host of other scientific experiments. I will assist with development of the best of these new exciting prospects,” **Domenici** said. “From my talks with the committee, I know they were very impressed with many aspects of WIPP, and they certainly suggested that WIPP should play an expanded role in complex scientific experiments that benefit from its unique attributes.”

“WIPP provides an extremely low background radiation environment, which is more important in many experiments than great depth, and it provides a very clean, very safe environment. There are already scientific experiments at WIPP, and I encourage the continued assessment of appropriate experiments there,” **Skeen** said.

During the review on Feb. 16, the lawmakers joined community and WIPP representatives in pushing the Eddy County site’s attributes, including: the cost-effectiveness of the WIPP site; the extensive infrastructure in place; WIPP’s very low

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background radiation, which is about 100 times lower than Homestake; its completely modern facilities, including fire prevention; its proximity and interaction with Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories; and, the fact that ultra sensitive, low background experiments have been done in WIPP since 1992.

“I commend the Carlsbad community and WIPP personnel for their work in supporting this evaluation, and encourage them to continue to pursue a broad range of scientific experiments that benefit from the WIPP environment,” **Domenici**said.

As chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, Domenici has oversight on providing funds for both the DOE/Environmental Management and DOE/Science budgets. In addition, he recently rejoined the Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, which funds the NSF.