



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson urges new DOE Secretary to protect benefits of LANL employees

SANTA FE - New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson sent a letter today to Department of Energy Secretary-Designate Samuel W. Bodman, urging him to protect the benefits of employees at Los Alamos National Laboratories.

"Frankly, I was disappointed to find that the Draft Request for Proposal contained language undermining our expectation that existing pension and post-retirement benefits would be retained in any future contract," Governor Richardson said in his letter.

Governor Richardson asked Secretary-Designate Bodman to reaffirm his commitment, ratified during his confirmation hearing, to ensure that language protecting the benefits is incorporated into DOE's final contract for the management of LANL.

A copy of the letter from Governor Richardson to The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman follows:

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary-Designate:

Congratulations on your nomination to become Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). It is a position I was privileged to hold, and one which gave me great satisfaction; I am confident you will enjoy your tenure there. Your previous experiences will serve you well in your new responsibilities as leader of this most important agency.

As Governor of New Mexico, I have been actively engaged in issues concerning DOE's award of the contract to manage the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Because of the strong relationship between the Lab and my State, I recently went to California to meet with the University of California (UC) Board of Regents, to encourage the University to enter the competition for the contract to continue its management of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. I told the Regents that the future of Los Alamos would best be served by DOE issuing the new contract to the University because of its unmatched scientific and technological quality.

New Mexico's economy, and particularly that of northern New Mexico, is heavily dependent on the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and it is therefore important to New Mexico, as it is to our country, that the Laboratory continue to be an excellent scientific institution, bringing the best scientific and technical talent to bear on solving problems of the highest national security import.

As I said to the Regents, it is the high quality of the Lab's scientific and technical staff that makes the Lab great. As a Nation, we must not do anything that will drive away, or make it difficult to recruit that talent. The continuation of these benefits will ensure that the Laboratory avoids massive retirements by continuing to be an attractive place to work, and continues to attract the best scientific and technical workforce possible. The continuation of these benefits, as a matter of equity, also will ensure that the Laboratory's retirees, most of whom live in New Mexico, continue to receive the pension and post retirement health benefits they always have expected for the past 62 years.

Frankly, I was disappointed to find that the Draft Request for Proposal (RFP) contained language undermining our expectation that existing pension and post-retirement benefits would be retained in any future contract. I was disappointed, as well as many others, because Secretary Abraham had promised that this would be done in April of 2003. While I am sure this was Secretary Abraham's intent, it is nevertheless the case that clearly inconsistent language was included in the Draft RFP.

Because of this, I request that you give this issue your personal attention to ensure that this commitment, that you ratified at your confirmation hearing, gets incorporated into DOE's final contract for the management of Los Alamos National Laboratory in a way that any bidder will be required and able to meet, just as the University of California (pursuant to DOE's direction) has done since the Laboratory's inception in 1943. I also expect that the final contract will require that any winning contractor continue to be good community leaders, assisting in community and economic development, as UC is now doing.

Again, congratulations on your nomination to become Secretary of Energy; the Department of Energy is very important to America's security and its economic and scientific future. I wish you well and look forward to working with you in your new post. Please be assured that you can count on me to do whatever I can do to help DOE advance the contributions that our State's DOE laboratories and facilities can make to the future of our country.