



News Release

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60+ Organizations and Celebrities Urge New Mexico Governor to Oppose Proposed Nuclear Facility

HOBBS, New Mexico - More than 60 organizations from across the United States, as well as music stars Bonnie Raitt and Ani DiFranco, urged New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson (D) to oppose the licensing of the proposed Louisiana Energy Services (LES) uranium enrichment plant that would be built near Eunice, N.M. Sponsored by Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) and Public Citizen, the letter was delivered today at the first pre-hearing conference on the licensing of the facility. NIRS and Public Citizen jointly have intervened in that process, raising several substantive issues that raise serious questions about the merits of the LES project. The state of New Mexico has also petitioned to intervene through its environment department and attorney general.

Issues raised by the groups include inadequate and implausible radioactive/hazardous waste disposal plans by LES; greatly underestimated costs of waste disposal and ultimate decommissioning of the proposed facility; impacts of the plant on groundwater and local water supply, need for the facility, and its negative impact on national security and critical U.S. nuclear non-proliferation programs.

“This letter—signed by a broad spectrum of national and international groups—represents the degree of suspicion held against LES, a company that has been plagued by security problems and has been less than forthright in its dealings with the public,” said Wenonah Hauter, director of Public Citizen’s Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program. “Government officials in Tennessee got wise to LES when it tried to locate a plant there—let’s hope the same is true for New Mexico.”

After initially supporting the proposed LES facility, Gov. Richardson has backtracked in recent months, and has raised serious concerns about its radioactive waste disposal plans. The group letter noted that one of the key partners in LES’ parent company, the European consortium Urenco, is British Nuclear Fuels, Ltd, a nearly-bankrupt British-government-supported company that almost lost its ability to operate in the U.S. when Gov. Richardson was the energy secretary under former President Bill Clinton, due to its inability to meet U.S. environmental regulations.

“The state of New Mexico has good cause to oppose this project,” said Michael Mariotte, executive director of NIRS. “We believe that New Mexicans have more to lose than to gain with LES, and we hope that the state will be a vigorous critic in this hearing.”

To read the letter, please go to <http://www.citizen.org/documents/richardsonletter.pdf>. Copies of the intervention petition are available at www.nirs.org.

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