



Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

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House of Representatives approves cuts to Bush warhead programs

Bill would halt new plutonium “pit” factory at Los Alamos, end new warhead

Udall amendment to restore pit production, other nuke weapon funding fails

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The U.S. House of Representatives is currently poised to approve the nuclear weapons budget proposed by its Appropriations Committee. Among other provisions, the bill would end halt construction of two new plutonium facilities at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and the quarter-billion dollar fence that would surround LANL’s new and upgraded plutonium facilities, if and when they are completed.

The bill cuts plutonium warhead core (“pit”) production funding, most of which is spent at LANL, by half. Overall, NNSA estimates these cuts will cost LANL some 2,000 jobs.

We believe retirements and related personnel management reforms – please call for details – would obviate the need for staff layoffs at LANL.

The bill ends the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program, a proposal described by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) as an effort to replace the entire U.S. stockpile. All in all, the bill would cut Weapons Activities spending by about 6% from current (FY 2007) levels and about 10% from the Administration’s requested FY 2008 levels, rebalancing Department of Energy (DOE) spending by this fraction toward nonproliferation efforts and renewable energy.

Yesterday Congressman Tom Udall introduced an amendment to restore approximately \$190 million (M) of these proposed cuts in weapons spending. Udall would take this money from NNSA administration, currently \$342 M for all programs (a 56% cut overall).

Mr. Udall spoke from the floor this afternoon (i.e. 11:15 MDT) requesting that the funds restored, should the amendment pass, go into three programs cut at LANL: Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities (RTBF), the proposed “Roadrunner” supercomputer, and “science campaigns.”

The only named RTBF project to be cut at LANL in this bill is the proposed “Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement” (CMRR) project, for pit production. By asking to restore RTBF funding, Mr. Udall in effect asked the House to restore funding for new pit production facilities at LANL.

Congressmen Visclosky (D-IN), Hobson (R-OH), and Stupak (D-MI) spoke vehemently against Mr. Udall’s amendment. The presiding member announced that the amendment failed on a voice vote. A recorded vote was requested – a formality at this point – and this is scheduled to take place later today. Congresswoman Heather Wilson did not propose an amendment to restore nuclear weapons spending, though yesterday she spoke against the cuts.

Study Group director Greg Mello: “We are thrilled the House has spoken against the rush to build new plutonium pits in a bipartisan manner. Thousands of New Mexicans have also spoken out on this, and we at the Study Group have worked long and hard to stop it. It is the single worst aspect of the Bush nuclear warhead plan, the one that enables the rest. We have also worked hard to halt the insane rush to build new production facilities and to halt NNSA’s push for a new “family” of warheads. We are very pleased that a bipartisan majority in the House supports us on all these points.”

“At the same we are highly disappointed that Tom Udall has positioned himself in favor of new warhead factories – and would pay for them by cutting DOE oversight. Most scientists at LANL do not even support pit production there, not to mention the rest of his constituency. What is he thinking?”

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