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SENATE MEMORIAL 9

45TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2001

INTRODUCED BY

Don Kidd

A MEMORIAL

**REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY TO CONTINUE
ITS SUPPORT TO THE WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT AS A FACILITY
FOR USE BY THE PARTICLE ASTROPHYSICS RESEARCH COMMUNITY.**

**WHEREAS, from the initial development of nuclear power
during World War II to the present, New Mexico has given far
more than its proportionate share of resources and energy, and
this commitment continues today with the outstanding
capabilities of Sandia national laboratories and Los Alamos
national laboratory, as well as other national resources such
as White Sands missile range and the very large array of the
national radio astronomy observatory; and**

**WHEREAS, southeastern New Mexico has continued the trend
by providing the host disposal site for the nation's defense-
related nuclear waste, the United States department of**

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1 energy's waste isolation pilot plant, in one of the world's
2 largest evaporite salt deposits, near Carlsbad, New Mexico;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, the deep geologic waste repository opened less
5 than two years ago, and has already announced the availability
6 of its underground and mine infrastructure to the particle
7 astrophysics research community; and

8 WHEREAS, the New Mexico congressional delegation has
9 applauded the department of energy for its willingness to make
10 the waste isolation pilot plant available for purposes other
11 than waste disposal and has pledged its support; and

12 WHEREAS, the department of energy conducted a workshop in
13 Carlsbad for the particle astrophysics community this past
14 summer that brought wide interest and participation, and the
15 consensus from the workshop was that an underground research
16 facility at the waste isolation pilot plant is desired and
17 needed; and

18 WHEREAS, for far too long United States-sponsored
19 research requiring geologic shielding from cosmic rays has
20 been performed at laboratories outside the United States; and

21 WHEREAS, it is time to establish a national facility in
22 the United States, and several collaborations have made
23 arrangements at the waste isolation pilot plant to begin
24 construction of experiments while others have approached the
25 plant with long-range plans; and

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1 WHEREAS, the department of energy continues to support
2 these efforts by providing the mine infrastructure and support
3 services already in place and earmarked for thirty-five years
4 of continuous operation; and

5 WHEREAS, the waste isolation pilot plant's primary
6 attributes are that its host rock, salt, contains very little
7 background radiation, unlike virtually all hard-rock mines,
8 and that its waste disposal mission already pays for the high
9 cost of providing an underground environment; and

10 WHEREAS, the cost savings realized by association with an
11 existing federal project that provides mine-operations support
12 are very important with almost all experiments can effectively
13 be conducted at the waste isolation pilot plant's relatively
14 shallow depth; and

15 WHEREAS, the cost savings realized by creating an
16 underground laboratory at the waste isolation pilot plant may
17 even allow those few experiments that need additional depth to
18 be conducted at other existing facilities available in Canada,
19 Italy and Japan; and

20 WHEREAS, the department of energy is a science agency and
21 has recognized that it can contribute to the nation's overall
22 science portfolio by providing the use of the waste isolation
23 pilot plant for purposes other than waste disposal; and

24 WHEREAS, America's cold war victory has resulted in the
25 creation of an underground resource of great value;

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the United States department of energy be requested to continue its support for making the waste isolation pilot plant's underground and mine infrastructure available to the particle astrophysics research community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of the United States department of energy and to the New Mexico congressional delegation.