State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
Santa Fe

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Monday, July 6, 2026

Members of the Environmental Improvement Board,

As a community organizer, I've led efforts to build public support for change, like raising the minimum wage in Las Cruces. I know what a credible campaign looks like. It's clear to me that Oracle's effort to win approval of an air quality permit to operate a massive power plant for Project Jupiter lacks integrity.

Many New Mexicans have spoken out about positive comments being submitted to the N.M. Environment Department in their names that they did not approve. They include Albuquerque City Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn. This is unacceptable.

That is one reason I oppose Yucca Growth Infrastructure LLC's air quality permit application for Project Jupiter in Santa Teresa.

But it's hardly the only reason. Project Jupiter proposes to use Bloom Energy fuel cells and asks for permission to emit more than 10 million tons of greenhouse gasses into our air every year. While that's a 30 percent reduction from their previous plan for power generation, the innovation and access to financing that this industry has demonstrated indicates they have the capacity to do better.

I was fortunate to spend the Fourth of July holiday weekend in the mountains. I woke up Saturday morning to the smell of smoke from the nearby Sacaton Fire, which is burning out of control in the Gila National Forest. It was a stark reminder of the urgency caused by the ongoing climate collapse we have created.

Project Jupiter's water use will be low, if the developers behind it keep their promises. That's a good thing. While I understand the project's need for a massive and stable power source, we need the developers to commit to technologies that also keep emissions as low as possible.

Their current air quality permit application does not do that. While they are legally bound by their agreements with Doña Ana County to make Project Jupiter net-zero carbon by 2045, we need the path to net-zero carbon to begin the moment Project Jupiter goes online – which could be months away, if they meet their goals.

I want Yucca Growth Infrastructure to withdraw this application and come back with a new power plan that reduces emissions further by including a renewable energy component like solar. There is plenty of land adjacent to Project Jupiter where an array can be built.

If the developers refuse to withdraw this application, I am urging you, the members of the Environmental Improvement Board, to deny it.

Project Jupiter is on track to be built. Buildings are already being erected at the massive construction site. The developers have already spent lots of money. They are fully invested in this project.

Given that reality, I have negotiated money for water and sewer infrastructure in Southern Doña Ana County and helped build the programs that will help New Mexicans get the jobs created by Project Jupiter.

Demanding reduced emissions and the inclusion of a renewable energy component in Project Jupiter's power generation plans is a continuation of my efforts to build the economy we desperately need without compromising New Mexico's precious resources.

We still have the ability to negotiate a better deal for New Mexicans by reducing Project Jupiter's emissions. And when the developers come back to NMED with a new air quality permit application that does that, I expect them to run a canvassing effort to garner support that has the integrity New Mexicans deserve.

We need industrial growth. We also need it to be a good neighbor.

I appreciate your careful consideration of Yucca Growth Infrastructure's application and your diligent work to care for our land, water and air. Thank you for your service to the people of New Mexico.

Sincerely,

Rep. Sarah Silva